

# THE CENTENNIAL REVIEW

VOL.V, NO.3 SUMMER 1961

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## CULTURE AND EVOLUTION\*

Erich Kahler

### I

THE TERMS "Culture" and "Evolution" are by no means self-evident. They have been understood in different ways, and the variety of these meanings reflects a variety of human experiences in different historical situations. A brief survey of the diverse uses of the words will show how the meaning of the terms kept broadening, and then, as a reactive consequence, narrowed down into more specific connotations.

The word "Culture" derives from Latin *cultura* and *cultus*, which mean care, cultivation, but carry a variety of connotations, from "training," "fostering," "adornment," to "worship," and "cult." Both words were used originally in an attributive, functional sense, designating cultivation of *something*. In fact, *cultura* occurs first in the composite form *agri cultura*, agriculture, tilling, cultivation of the soil, and traces of this origin persist up to the Middle Ages when occasionally the worship of God is referred to as *agricultura Dei*, "agricult" of God. The meaning of *cultura* broadens through diverse applications: Cicero speaks of *cultura animi*, cultivation of the mind, which he identifies with philosophy; but gradually *cultura animi* ceased to be so restricted and came to signify cultivation of arts and letters, of intellectual capacities in general. Thus, the common feature of all kind of cultivation was brought to the fore, namely control and organization, refinement and sublimation of nature.

In this way, the various attributive, functional uses of *cultura* and *cultus* fused into the general and substantive term "Culture," as we still apply it when we oppose culture to barbarism, or when we call a person a "cultivated man." This change from an attributive to a substantive significance

\* First given as a lecture at the 1960 Graduation Colloquium of the Albert Einstein School of Medicine in New York.

implies a turn from the representation of *cultura*, cultivation, as an *activity* (cultivating something, cultivating oneself—*cultivare se ipsum*) to the concept of *culture as an established condition*, a state of being cultivated.

In this capacity as a specific condition of man, a state of being, the term "Culture" became synonymous and interchangeable with other terms, such as *humanitas*, humanity, that is, the condition worthy of a human being, as compared with that of the animal; or *civilitas*, civility, and *urbanitas*, urbanity, the condition fitting a city dweller and citizen, as against that of a peasant, a boor. The Roman Empire, and the Latin countries, which originated in Roman provinces and followed the Roman tradition, issued from and centered on a dominating city. The country at large was considered subservient to the city, and city life was the standard of life, in contradistinction to Germany, where the cities developed late, after and within the framework of a universal Empire, and where, due to the persistent rusticality of the nobility, cities never achieved such a predominant position as in the West. Until very late, Germany never had a capital city. These differences seem to me to explain the eventual prevalence of the term "Civilization" in the West and of "Culture" in Germany. The German notion and high valuation of culture, *Kultur*, evolved from the concepts of German philosophy. *Kultur* was identified with *Bildung*, the cultivation of inner life, of mental and spiritual capacities, and held superior to Western "Civilization" which was understood as a complex of outer forms: nicety of manners and development of technological and socio-political institutions.

From the sixteenth century on, a new concept of culture began to form. In the wake of the rise of modern nations and territorial states, political thinkers started to differentiate the various national customs and institutions, and to speculate about the national denominators of such specific customs and institutions. The theorist of the French monarchy, Jean Bodin, in his *Six Livres de la République*, 1576, inaugurated the notion of different forms of republic as *organisms*, growing and decaying like natural organisms and peculiarly



distinct according to character and climate. He thereby anticipated the modern theories of Spengler and Toynbee. Later, Montesquieu, in his *Esprit des Lois*, 1748, and Voltaire, in his *Essai sur les Moeurs*, 1757, spoke of "*le génie du peuple*," genius of the people, its "*esprit général*," general spirit, its "*genre de vie*," which may be adequately rendered by "style of life" or "way of life." I need not recount the whole genealogy of this notion which in the nineteenth century led up to the concept of "cultures" as specific forms of life of ethnic communities, or of epochs. As far as I can see, the Swiss historian, Jakob Burckhardt, in the middle of the nineteenth century, was the first to apply this concept of a culture to specific studies in his *Kultur der Renaissance* and his *Griechische Kulturgeschichte*. Likewise, modern anthropologists have adopted the term "Culture" in this specific sense for the tribal groups which they explore.

The shift from the concept of culture as a general human condition to the concept of culture as a particular style of life of ethnic groups, in short, from culture to a culture, involves another important change of outlook. Culture seen as a general state and stage of human existence carried a *value* connotation which it lost when it was understood as merely a different style of life. Culture as a value was equivalent to superiority over the state of plain nature, over barbarism and bestialism; it was an intellectual and moral criterion to measure the worth and dignity of individuals and peoples. It meant improvement, refinement, enlightenment, and this, in turn, implied development.

Thus, originally, *cultura*, culture, was *synonymous with development*, and—this is most important to note—development in the sense of *progress*, of betterment of the human condition.

## II

Here we have arrived at the problem of *development*, or *evolution*. Both words denote fundamentally the same: development means literally unwrapping, e-volution means unfolding. There is only one difference: evolution has come to

be the more general, development the more specific, term.

The story of the concept of development in its broader sense of evolution is, as far as the human domain is concerned, identical with the history of history, which cannot be retraced in detail within the limits of this paper. Suffice it to recall the main phases.

Ancient thinking and society were founded on a stable image of the universe. The concept of evolution was arrested in the bud; it was itself, paradoxical as this may sound, static; it was implicit in the appreciation of culture. Even Aristotle who, because of his concept of *entelechy*, is held to be the initiator of the idea of evolution and who indeed regarded the different realms of organic nature, the vegetal, the animal, and the human, as consecutive evolutionary stages, considered only one as the essential premise of the other, but did not assume a real transformation of one into the other. To him, any organic being or genus was created separately by a touch of the deity. Nor did there yet exist among the ancients, at least before the Hellenistic period, any notion of an historical evolution of humanity. The Greeks and the Romans did not realize actual history, integral history, that is, history as that single, unique, and unrepeatable flow of happenings passing through and beyond the individual peoples, history as the comprehensive record of the career of man. To them, the human world was either rooted in eternity, or it was believed to be recurrently created and destroyed, in a circular movement. Accordingly, their conception of change and evolution was still very shallow and was limited by the notion of a periodical recurrence of events.

The experience of actual evolution was inaugurated by the Jews, who came to visualize history as the road of man from a primal state of *unconscious innocence*, which he lost through his fall, to an ultimate state of *consciously achieved innocence* in the Kingdom of God to be established at the end of time. To be sure, this progression of human history may still appear as a circular movement in that it seems to return to the original situation. But, in fact, the situation at which it is aimed lies on a new level, on the level of consciousness. This

makes a crucial difference: it establishes the uniqueness of the whole process. The messianic prophecy of Judaism led up to Christianity, and the belief in a sacrificial help of the divine savior transformed the Judaic road toward a humanly achieved innocence into a road to divine salvation. So, in the Christian era, evolution was equivalent to man's gradual preparation for salvation. Through the Judeo-Christian concepts, then, human destiny was dynamized; it was made into a process, into one, unique evolutionary process. This evolutionary process made explicit what was merely implied in the ancient concepts of culture: the notion of betterment and sublimation. Again, development meant improvement, accomplishment of a higher and happier state of man.

Finally, when at the end of the Middle Ages, the rule of the Christian dogma crumbled and human reason supplanted God, rationalism inherited from Christian theology the concept of history as man's road to perfection. To be sure, the established definite end, as expected in the Kingdom of God, had vanished and was replaced by the *indefinite* goal of a Kingdom of Reason: evolution was no longer a road to a distinct redeeming event but became an unending approach to secular betterment and happiness through the rational, scientific, and technological improvements of man's living conditions. The goal was split into gradual steps; it came to merge with the road itself, with *Progress* explicit, its ends moving along with it. The emphasis shifted from the final being to infinite becoming.

Since the late nineteenth century, and increasingly in the twentieth, the belief in human progress began to wane. Or, to be more exact, what dwindled away was the hope that the scientific and technological improvement of *material* conditions would by itself bring about an improvement of man's *inner* condition, that is to say, make him better and happier. Long before the turn of the century, men of vision had seen the dark reverse of our expanding rational enlightenment, the growing collectivization and dehumanization which technological progress was carrying with it. They foresaw what was to happen in the great crises of the twentieth century:

the abrupt slump of humanity from an overstrained civilization into a new, rationalized barbarism. The hopes of the rationalistic generations turned into bitter disillusionment with progress, and since evolution had always been identified with progress, the notion of evolution went down together with the idea of progress.

There were other factors which brought evolution into disrepute. In the domain of history, it was the hypertrophy of historicism itself that discredited the very idea of history as a coherent evolution of man: the overgrowth of newly discovered factual material obscured the broad lines of development and made historians apprehensive of "generalizations." Or, more exactly, it was not so much the growth of factual material in itself, but rather the failure of historians to integrate the new facts into a general concept of human evolution, due to the scientific ambition and positivistic tendency of modern historiography. As a reaction against the great philosophical and social conceptions of the post-Kantian era, in the first half of the nineteenth century, a sweeping distrust of uncritical speculation set in. Such a reaction was certainly justified to a certain degree, but, as usual, it was carried to the opposite extreme; it led to an attitude that was just as uncritical. Under the influence of scientific positivism, all criterion of facts was lost; historical research arrived at what I would call a democracy of facts, a total equality of facts, which invalidated the distinction between essential and non-essential. Where could a broad evaluation of facts derive from when no general view was left of the historical process? Any clear statement of a development became impossible; it simply disappeared under its qualifications. Eventually, this tendency resulted in scientific, basically anti-historical, theories of history, such as Spengler's and Toynbee's, which split the process of human evolution into so many "philosophically contemporaneous" cultures in order to abstract from them "laws of history" equivalent to laws of nature. The constructions of these "cultures" or "civilizations" are no less uncritically speculative than the old philosophical systems.

Spengler and Toynbee are only the most conspicuous ex-

ponents of the anti-historical and anti-evolutional trend that developed since the beginning of our century and pervades all studies in the human domain. It manifests itself in this country in the Great Books movement, in the principles and practices of the New Criticism, in the purely descriptive methods of the American school of anthropology and its opposition to the evolutionary theories of the French anthropologists Durckheim and Lévy-Bruhl. Here, in anthropology, too, the anti-evolutionist tendency is due to radical positivism.

In biology the concept of evolution, modified though it has been, could never be given up, just as the historical point of view is the only one from which geology, the structure of the earth, can be understood. But even in paleobiology anti-evolutionism left its traces. The German paleontologist, Edgar Dacqué, a very learned and imaginative man, came out with a theory that was meant to reverse the whole course of evolution of living forms. In his book *Urwelt, Sage und Menschheit*, 1924, he contended that from the beginning of life there existed different genetically unrelated types, or type groups (*Typenkreise*) which gradually developed into the various animal forms. Like these, man too has existed, rudimentarily, from the outset as a distinct genetic type. Of course, Dacqué could not deny that man had to go through various animal stages before reaching his human form. But this he explained by the theory that the specific circumstances and environments of the different paleontological periods imposed on genetically independent types certain seemingly homogeneous structural forms and organs, structural fashions as it were: from the Cambrian to the Devonian the dominant form was fish; in the Permian the various species were wearing amphibian, so to speak; from the Permian to the Cretaceous they changed to reptile; with the Eocene it was mammals; and later the dominant form was ape.<sup>1</sup> As a residue of the phenomenon, Dacqué mentions the fauna of Australia where the most diverse species of higher mam-

<sup>1</sup> In the paleozoic period, Dacqué says, when the salamander form was the "style of the epoch," even the first reptiles, or better those types that were on the point of becoming reptiles, appeared in the attire of the salamander. Later, the first flying vertebrates were just winged reptiles.

mals seem to imitate the form of a lower type of mammal, the marsupial: the marsupial badger, the opossum, the kangaroo, the phalanger, the Australian bear (koala), all of them appear as different versions of the marsupial form.

But even this hypothesis does not fundamentally invalidate the fact of evolution. The assumption of several original types instead of a single, common one would indicate nothing else than the existence of many parallel evolutions; and in regard to the concept of human evolution, it does not make much difference whether one calls a reptile a reptile, or man in the temporary disguise of a reptile.

### III

The main source of the trend, indeed the intellectual fashion, of anti-evolutionism was, as I said, disillusionment with progress and the identification of evolution with progress. It seems to me that in order properly to understand what evolution means, it is necessary to put an end to this confusion and clearly to distinguish evolution from progress. The first point I want to make is that *there was no progress, but there was evolution*. Progress implies a value statement; evolution denotes a plainly factual process.

Progress means improvement. In the human domain it was understood as an improvement not only of living conditions, but of human life; in other words, an advancement not only of material circumstances, but of happiness and morality, or, to put it more modestly, of action according to reason. Evidently, these high expectations of the era of enlightenment have not been fulfilled. Biological theories also identified evolution with progress inasmuch as they took it to be a succession of steps leading up to the human being as its peak, if not its definite end. Indeed, Julian Huxley, even today, seems to assume that the human individual is the final perfection of evolution. In the face of our present situation, this appears to me a rather questionable human presumption. So when we speak of evolution today, we do better, I think, to eliminate the notion of progress which cannot be divested of its original, plainly optimistic meaning.



But if not progress, what is evolution? First of all, we should take into account that in science recent experiences and findings have initiated a trend of thought that runs diametrically counter to the fashion of anti-evolutionism. Our picture of nature has become thoroughly dynamic, that is to say, nature no longer appears, as it did appear to scientists up to the nineteenth century, as a static, eternally immutable sphere; it has revealed itself as a *process*. Not only does it, as modern physics has shown, in its entirety consist of processes; it is in itself and as a whole, and it has always been, a process. Astronomy today considers itself a historical science, while biological nature has been seen as a process for a long time, ever since Buffon and Lamarck. To be sure, the research of one and a half centuries has produced a picture of the history of life which makes it appear no longer as a straight line development, but rather as a tree-like growth of multifarious ramifications. The most important change, however, that has taken place in our scientific views with respect to the problem of evolution is the fact that the gap has begun to close, the barriers are crumbling, between the inorganic and the organic stages of nature.

When we take all these experiences together, then, the history of the universe, the history of the earth, the history of life, and the history of man, all emerge as so many sections and stages of *one* unique, or, to put it more cautiously, peculiar happening. This overwhelming happening which started from the universe and has this very moment arrived at the here and now where we sit reflecting about it, this process, viewed in its entirety, shows undeniably a definite direction. Mind you, I say *direction*, and by this I do not mean a *plan*, transcendental or otherwise. Here again a strict distinction has to be made. A direction in the sense of *trend* does not necessarily imply direction in the sense of *guidance* or *providence* or *design*. I see a direction, but I would not venture to say anything about the origin or cause of such direction. This direction is what permits us to speak of evolution. Indeed, the most superficial glance at what happened from the amoeba to man, from Neanderthal man to a human

condition which produced personalities like Buddha and Jesus, Dante and Shakespeare, Newton and Einstein, this simple glance at the career of life and of man compels us to assume some sort of evolution.

But again, what is this evolution? What is the nature of this happening? When we ask biologists, we hardly get one clear-cut answer; we get many partial answers concerning functional or structural features. Gaylord Simpson, for instance, enumerates all sorts of criteria of evolution (he calls it "progress"), such as "the tendency for life to expand, to fill in all the available spaces in the livable environments," "improvement in adaptation," "control over the environment," "increasing structural complication," "progress in individualization," etc.<sup>2</sup> In all this, he is very anxious to remain "objective" with regard to man, that is to say, not to look at evolution from a pre-established point of view of man as the goal or climax of evolution. He refuses to accept the criterion of "increasing approximation to man"; indeed, he finds certain partial aspects which show man not exactly at the top, for instance: "If one group had to be picked as most dominant now, it would have to be the insects," which implies a rather narrow, purely physical concept of dominance.<sup>3</sup> However, he cannot help listing man in almost all respects within the highest range of evolution; indeed, he declares on the grounds of evidence: "Man is the highest animal. The fact that he alone is capable of making such a judgment is in itself part of the evidence that this decision is correct." He goes even farther by stating that man is an animal ". . . in which, although organic evolution continues on its way, a fundamentally new sort of evolution has also appeared," the basis of which "is a new sort of heredity, the inheritance of learning."<sup>4</sup> Actually, however, he stops, as most biologists do, at the threshold of this new kind of evolution, at the point where *Homo sapiens* began his career on his own plane which is history and which entails psychic, mental, and social develop-

<sup>2</sup> George Gaylord Simpson, *The Meaning of Evolution* (Yale University Press, 1951), pp. 240ff.

<sup>3</sup> Simpson, p. 246.

<sup>4</sup> Simpson, p. 285ff.



ments, entirely new dimensions of development, by far surpassing the heredity of learning. Julian Huxley is more specifically positive in that he does not hesitate, as I said before, to make the bold assertion that the human individual not only is, but "*will continue to be* the highest product of evolution."<sup>5</sup> Evolution he defines as an increase in complexity, "... greater control, greater independence or self-regulation, greater, but at the same time more harmonious complexity of organization, greater range of knowledge or available experience."<sup>6</sup>

## IV

I will now venture an interpretation of my own, taking into consideration both the biological and the historical spheres, but disregarding the genetical and functional aspects of the problem. When we view the record of the history of life and the history of man from a vantage point, looking only at the succession of forms up to now, evolution appears as a gradual, but consistent *extension of scope, extension of range of being*, with all the growing differentiation, organization, concentration, with all the variation and intensification of experience that go with it. Such extension of range of being seems equivalent to a process of *interiorization*, which means transference and transformation of outer functions into inner functions, an increasing incorporation of external and extensive world contents into internal and intensive organism. Actually, the process consists of two processes, approximating what the Stoics called *diastolé* and *systolé*, distension and concentration. Only through distension can new world contents be appropriated and integrated.

Let me concretely exemplify this assumption. To begin with, life itself is such a concentration, interiorization, intensification of physical elements: the successive formation of molecule and cell. The process continues in the transformation of living forms: in the development leading from sporif-

<sup>5</sup> T. H. Huxley and Julian Huxley, *Touchstone for Ethics 1893-1943* (New York, 1947), p. 33.

<sup>6</sup> Huxley, p. 146.

erous plants, which multiply through detached spores, to flowering plants, propagating through internal generation, and in the animal sphere, correspondingly, from ovipara to mammals—this, even Gaylord Simpson stresses as being one of the most firmly established evolutionary traits: "The mammals are . . . the highest animals in this particular respect and the case is clear-cut and indisputable, from the protection and uniformity of internal gestation through most highly perfected post-natal care including provision of nearly uniform and highly nutritious food from the mother."<sup>7</sup> Parallel developments are: the shift of the body supports from exoskeleton (shells, as with arachnids, insects, crustaceans, testaceans) to endoskeleton (inner bone structure of the vertebrates; the bony fishes are the latest among fishes); furthermore, the gradual interiorization of metabolism, and the formation of a central nervous system; the advance from the metamorphosis of metabolic plants and animals to the immediate generation in higher forms. In all these instances, external processes and relations have become inner functions and systems and have been more and more closely integrated in an expanding organic system.

Integration, in this process, goes hand in hand with differentiation—integration, not only internally, of the various differentiating, specializing parts and organs, and of the organism as a whole, but also, correspondingly, externally, of an ever wider and more differentiated world. Increasing differentiation of the organic system means correlatively an expansion of scope, an extension and amplification of relationship and control. So we have here a two-way process of expansion and concentration, and it is hardly possible to make out which originated which.

The same development can be shown in the specifically human sphere, the sphere of history, in which this evolution was carried on, and carried over from the physical to the psychic, mental, and the more and more predominant social level. External, magical and mythical, relationships of the human being with external, divine powers gradually turned

<sup>7</sup> Simpson, pp. 257ff.

into interiorized connections of rational ideas and concepts; the visually pictured, diversely animate universe of participation and religion passed over into an inner realm of human reason organizing exploratory experiences. External dependencies were replaced by man's growing feeling of inner autonomy, by judgment, choice, man's control of himself and of his world. The rise of human consciousness corresponds to the unfolding of his counterpart, an ever more abundant and diversified world. We see that this again is as much a process of differentiation, elaboration of distinctive intellectual faculties, as it is a process of integration, of incorporating an ever vaster phenomenal territory.

When we finally compare the state of human knowledge and of man's technological mastery of nature in the first centuries of the modern era with the one we witness today, we notice a further step in the same direction. The mechanistic universe of Newtonian physics was linked together by outer, grossly material, and sensorily conceivable forces; modern physics faces a universe not moved, but perpetually moving by itself and in itself, a universe in which matter is identical with energy, and which is approachable only by increasingly speculative means of understanding. Today, infinitely subtler methods of intellectual grasp correspond to a hitherto unparalleled extension of the objective orbit of human contemplation and manipulation. I need not emphasize the advance of our technological control of nature, which has reduced our globe to a single room as it were, and has taken us to the verge of interplanetary communications. Modern biology and medicine have penetrated into the microsphere of genes and hormones and enzymes, and have begun to elucidate the subtle interconnections within the organic whole; modern psychology has entered into the sphere of the unconscious. A similar process may be observed in the modern arts, in their reaching beyond the range of portrayal of individual, tangibly "objective" forms, of individual narrative, of sensuous *melos*, into abstract fundamentals of form as such, of phenomenal appearance as such, existence as such, sound relations as such.

## V

What I have stated just now requires, however, some specification which introduces a new aspect into the problem of evolution. This new aspect concerns the *relation between individual and group*, and that is, *between different levels of existence*. It seems to me that without a clarification of this relationship it is impossible properly to understand what evolution means in our present situation. For my statement must be qualified to the effect that *the tremendous recent expansion of human reach, and incorporation of world contents in human consciousness, applies to man as a whole, but no longer to the human individual*. When Julian Huxley characterizes evolution as an increase of complexity and organization of complexity, greater control, greater independence or self-regulation, greater range of knowledge, etc., it appears more than evident that this may be said of man, but hardly of the human individual in his present condition. The human individual today shows, on the contrary, a blatant decrease of control, independence, self-regulation, and range of knowledge; and this decrease on the *individual* level appears to be correlative with the increase on the *collective* level.

A. L. Kroeber in his essay, "The Concept of Culture in Science," distinguishes sharply the different "levels of organization" or "levels" pure and simple, the physico-chemical, the biological or organic, the social and cultural. And he rightly rejects the practice of nineteenth century science of applying the categories of one level to another level, or, more specifically, to reduce the terms of the higher levels to the supposedly basic ones of the physio-chemical level. "Gravitation," he says, "electrical conductivity, and element valence apply to organic bodies as well as to inorganic ones. But principles or laws such as these are the only ones which apply to inorganic bodies; and yet they do not to any serious degree explain the specific organic phenomena of hereditary repetition, of conception and death, of adaptability. These specifically organic processes *conform* to established physio-chemical processes; they cannot be *derived* from them." So the

different levels are to a certain degree autonomous while they are still in certain respects "... dependent on the subjacent ones and of support to the independent overlying ones."<sup>8</sup>

While sharing this view in general, I am inclined to assume a much closer connection between the various levels of existence. It was utterly wrong, of course, to derive the specific phenomena of one level from those of another level, but if we want to understand the real nature of any entity or being we cannot sharply separate one level from another, we cannot confine ourselves to considering one level strictly apart from its subjacent and overlying ones. We do not live as individuals *in* society or *in* a nation as within an overarching, delimitable space. We *are* this society, this nation to a large degree; we form part of it, and it forms part of us, down indeed to our physical being. We are, all of us, any entity or being is, *existing on different levels at the same time. Existence is a multilevel affair.* As a body, I am a natural organization of lower beings, living, moving, changing, growing and decaying beings, namely the *cells*. Any change or disturbance in this organization, or even in the organization of the cells themselves, has most powerful and serious effects on what we may consider the essence or quintessence of the physical system, the *psyche*. This is, after all, recognized in the psychosomatic theory and in recent psychiatry. The psyche, in turn, has a well-established influence on the *mind*. All such dependence, however, does not invalidate the fact that the functioning or operation on each specific level has its own distinct and, to a certain degree, autonomous character. We must also realize that all influence effective between different levels is a two-way process: it works upward as well as downward. There is a mutual interaction going on between mind, psyche, body, and so forth.

A similar interrelationship prevails between individual and group, and this interrelationship is crucial in regard to our specific concern. As a psycho-intellectual being, as a person and an individual, I move in a constantly interactive rela-

<sup>8</sup> A. L. Kroeber, "The Concept of Culture in Science," in *The Nature of Culture* (University of Chicago Press, 1952), pp. 120ff.

tionship with social units, with communities and collectives; the fundamental difference between these two kinds of social unit cannot and need not be elaborated within the present context. What matters is that, socially too, I live on different levels at the same time, in closest interdependence and interaction between my self and the various groups to which I belong. In point of fact, I am part of the groups, and the groups are part of my very self. I simply do not exist without them; and whenever anything changes in the groups, my personal self is affected by it. Accordingly, when we study social or psychic evolution, it is no use considering social forms and individual psyche separately, since they both move together and transform together, in constant interrelationship with each other. Whenever the one changes, the other changes with it, and the nature of the relationship changes too. What develops is not the group *per se*, or the individual *per se*, but the combination and the relationship of both, and we have to study both with regard to each other. Therefore, we cannot gain a complete picture of human processes if we deal with psychology without considering sociology, or conversely study sociology, or for that matter, any human conditions, happenings, and activities, without including psychology.

I said that the individual psyche changes with the change of social forms and *vice versa*, and that the nature of the relationship changes also. But along with these interrelated developments an even more important change has taken place. Evolution is, as I have attempted to show, a process of extension of scope. Now in the course of this process it happened at certain points that *the emphasis, the point of gravity of events, shifted from one level to another*. Just as with the emergence of *Homo sapiens* the emphasis has moved from body to mind, and evolution proper has turned into human history, in a similar way, in our age, since the nineteenth century, the point of gravity of events appears to have shifted from the individual to the collective level. And while on the collective level man has immensely expanded his reach, the individual, through this very process, has shrunk in inde-



pendence, self-regulation, power of control, and range of knowledge. The fact that the technological and intellectual scope of humanity has advanced far beyond the capacity of the individual mind, and that individual consciousness is less and less able to keep pace with the growing extent and complexity of happenings and with what I would call collective consciousness—namely, the vast corpus of our present, ever moving, ever changing knowledge—this tragic inadequacy of the individual is one of the basic causes of our human crisis.

## VI

Now how does *culture* fit into this picture? What role and meaning has it in the process of evolution?

Our historical survey of the term Culture has shown us four different concepts: 1) culture as a *human condition*, which implies a *value* (this is what we mean when we speak of a "cultivated man"); 2) the *value-free* concept of culture as a *specific way of life, style of life, of a people*, or, to use Kroeber's definition, as the *totality of customs and ways of life of a people*; 3) culture as an *ethnic entity pure and simple*, in which sense the term is generally used by modern anthropologists; and 4) culture as a *regionally meta-ethnic entity*, a concept that has been introduced by Leo Frobenius and Oswald Spengler and has been taken over by Toynbee for the construction of some of his civilizations.

These different concepts of culture are, as we have seen, manifestations of different evolutionary stages; they reflect the growth of human self-realization. The realization of the diversity, and the diverse organic coherence, of ethnic groups presupposes the Judaeo-Christian realization of a common humanity above and in all of them. In the pre-Christian, pre-Hellenistic, pre-Stoic era, each particular ethnic community identified humanity with itself. There is not too much difference between the attitude of peoples like the Zuñi, Déné, Kiowa, who by these tribal names naively designate human beings as equivalents of themselves, and the Greek and Roman identification of strangers with barbarians. Culture, to

the Greeks and the Romans, was the antithesis of barbarism, the advance on barbarism.

The ancient concept of *culture as a human condition and a value*, as an enlightened, sensitized, humane state, a most desirable state of the human being, as *paideia*, in the Greek sense, is still valid today; to express it we have no better word. *Culture in the sense of style of life, or the totality of customs*, seems to me a superfluous synonym. Why not say style of life, or customs? This is simpler, it means what it says. What concerns us closely, however, is the concept of a culture, *culture as an independent entity*, as a being in itself. Here, we have the choice between identifying a culture with an *ethnic community*, or the positing of *meta-ethnic cultures* comprehending various ethnic groups.

For Spengler and Toynbee the concept of man as a coherent entity hardly exists in any clearly stated form. Toynbee at least substitutes for it his theological superstructure which in a way unifies, or is expected retroactively to unify, the various civilizations, dead or alive. But both of them, Spengler and Toynbee, break up the coherence of human evolution in history into the isolated units of their "philosophically contemporaneous," meta-ethnic civilizations. What remains of a common human quality are the well-known parallelisms, the historical "laws of nature." (We may leave aside Spengler's occasional characterization of man as the "technological beast of prey.")

Since the whole of nature in its broadest perspective comes to be seen as a historical process, history proper must be understood as a unique section of a unique cosmic happening; it must be understood as the history of the organic genus, Man. Accordingly, we have first to explore the uniqueness of the process of human history, the uniqueness of its place within the larger, comprehensive whole of nature, and the uniqueness of its stages and ramifications, before we may be able to recognize the real, the *genotypical homologies* prevailing among its different subdivisions and sub-processes. We have first to establish what specific stage each subdivision represents within the whole of human history, and only over



against this coherence of historical consecution and diversity can we try to find out very cautiously what the different subdivisions, or variations, of the one historical process may have in common. If, however, we start from seeking general laws we are prone to crude simplifications and fallacies. An apparently identical phenomenon may have a fundamentally different significance in this and that specific unit according to their different origins, their different relations to the whole, the different evolutionary stages they represent. In studying history, we have to use a method diametrically opposite to that of Spengler and Toynbee; we have to strive for ever more subtle differentiation and grasp of the unique.

The unreliability and superficiality of "general laws" as derived from "philosophical contemporaneity" are furthermore increased if one chooses as units "civilizations" which first have to be established in order to yield their general laws. Such a procedure carries the danger of begging the question, namely, the temptation to shape the civilizations according to the general laws they are supposed to demonstrate. But apart from this ambiguity of Spengler's and Toynbee's concepts, their views must be considered inadequate in that they confine the historical processes to one single level, whereas, as I have tried to show, these processes move on different levels at the same time, and involve changes not only from stage to stage, but from level to level.

For all these reasons, I would prefer to stick to the units which human evolution itself has developed, the ethnic communities. Here again, I would not be inclined merely to equate these ethnic communities with "cultures." Culture and community are not exactly the same thing. It seems to me that the cultures and the communities have the same relationship to each other as the psyche or the character of an individual person has to his body. I would equate the culture of an ethnic entity in its subjective, inward aspect with the *psyche*, in its objective, outward aspect with the *character*, of an ethnic community.

There are, however, certain turning points in the historical process where cultures become independent of the place

and community in which they originated. When an old people goes down, and when, after its climactic flowerings and absorption of world contents to capacity, its physical power begins to disintegrate, something takes off, the spirit, the transcending form as it were, the residual character of this people, detaches itself from its specific origins, survives spiritually and fecundates new forces. Only such a transcending form of life that disengages itself from its specific origins and becomes a spiritual being of its own, influencing other units, merging with others, and carried farther by others even after its originator may have died down and dissolved, only such an independent entity may be seen as a culture, or civilization, *per se*, clearly distinguished from the people from which it has emerged. As seen in this aspect, cultures are not identical with their originating peoples and historical spheres; they are their offspring, their spiritual spores as it were. They mature very late and come into being as detached, separate units of history only in the ultimate stages of their originators. In this capacity, as independent entities, intermediate between ethnic communities and man, they represent and carry evolution.

The first cultures, or civilizations, of that kind, the first that were explicitly recognized as meta-ethnic, were those arising from the Greek and the Jewish peoples: *Hellenism* and *Christianism*. The very fact that they were so recognized indicates that they represent historical units of a higher order, involving a new stage, a new level of consciousness. Other examples are, within the European orbit, *Latinism*, the survival of Roman tradition, and in the Oriental sphere, *Buddhism* and *Islam*. The historical process entails a gradual shift to broader units, and at the same time to higher levels of consciousness. The process starts with peoples. Peoples are the unit which, in a relay as it were, carry the evolutionary process and develop, in their inner and outer forms, their psychic and social forms, man's specific quality and consciousness. Gradually, the widening scope produces new and broader units which later take over and lead the essential process.

## CULTURE AND EVOLUTION

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In our time, we are witnessing the gradual detachment and independent global spread of what we may identify as our *Western civilization*. Whether this Western civilization still means culture, in the original sense of the term, is, however, an open question.

# "THE UNWARY EGOTIST": A STUDY OF THE *OEDIPUS TYRANNUS*

Lillian Feder

## I

IN A BRIEF IMAGINARY dialogue between Diogenes and an acquaintance on the road to Delphi, Dio Chrysostom, a Greek rhetorician of the first century A.D., makes some important remarks about oracles in general and particularly about the oracular prophecy to Laius, father of Oedipus. Perhaps because Diogenes' manner in the dialogue is unassuming and he speaks rather lightly of serious matters, students of the *Oedipus Tyrannus* have paid little attention to his comments. Yet, in this dialogue Dio Chrysostom offers an important clue to the riddle of the play, which, despite the efforts of many recent scholars and critics, remains to a large extent unsolved.

Diogenes reminds his acquaintance of the inscription at Delphi, "Know thyself," and asks, is it not plain that the god "gives this command to all, in the belief that they do not know themselves?" He goes on to point out that since his acquaintance does not know himself, he cannot know man, and certainly cannot know or "use" a god. He warns him that oracles are obscure, and many men have been deceived by them. Then he tells him how Laius misunderstood the warning of the oracle. "The god," Diogenes says, "bade him 'not to beget, or having begotten, to expose.' And Laius was so foolish as to misunderstand both commands of the god, for he begot a son and did not rear him. Afterwards both he and all his house were destroyed, all because he had undertaken to 'make use of' Apollo when he lacked the ability."<sup>1</sup>

Dio Chrysostom's remarks suggest a method of studying the *Oedipus Tyrannus* which has not as yet been attempted. First, his warning regarding the ambiguity of oracles and the

<sup>1</sup> *The Tenth Discourse: On Servants*, trans. J. W. Cahoone, Loeb Classical Library (New York, 1932), I, 435-41.

difficulties involved in interpreting them points up the necessity of reconsidering the oracular prophecies to Laius and Oedipus; secondly, his emphasis on self-knowledge as a prerequisite to proper use of an oracle's utterance indicates the predicament of Oedipus as he flees Corinth; and thirdly, his statement that only one who knows himself can attempt to know the nature of man sheds light on the true value of Oedipus' reply to the Sphinx, in which he takes so much pride throughout most of the play.

That oracles often speak ambiguously and symbolically is no news to students of Greek literature. Yet critics of the *Oedipus Tyrannus* seem to disregard these characteristics of oracular prophecy when they analyze the play itself. Modern scholarship has elucidated many qualities of Sophocles' art, his intellectual and political milieu, and his religious background,<sup>2</sup> and it is therefore disappointing to find that most analyses of the *Oedipus Tyrannus* in recent works on Sophocles, though they promise a new approach, lead only to traditional and rather narrow conclusions. Though modern critics often relate the concept of fate to the tragic limitations implicit in the human condition and thus do not interpret "fate" as mechanically as did their nineteenth-century predecessors, they seem to arrive at practically the same conclusion: Oedipus, who attempts to defy the will of the gods, must inevitably accept the tragic fate which they have predicted. In the words of Bernard Knox: "The play, in the simplest analysis, is a reassertion of the religious view of a divinely ordered universe, a view which depends on the concept of divine omniscience, represented in the play by Apollo's prophecy."

Like most critics of the play, Knox takes the oracular prophecy simply as a statement of what must literally take place according to a "divine will." Knox is not unaware of

<sup>2</sup> Some of the most interesting of the recent studies are: V. Ehrenberg, *Sophocles and Pericles* (Oxford, 1954); G. M. Kirkwood, *A Study of Sophoclean Drama* (Ithaca, 1958); H. D. Kitto, *Sophocles, Dramatist and Philosopher* (Oxford, 1958); Bernard Knox, *Oedipus at Thebes* (New Haven, 1957); J. C. Opstelten, *Sophocles and Greek Pessimism* (Amsterdam, 1952); Cedric Whitman, *Sophocles* (Cambridge, 1951).

the possible ambiguity of oracles. In fact, he takes great pains in his book to show that "the human being has freedom to understand or misunderstand the prophecy," and he gives many illustrations from Herodotus of misinterpretations of oracles. He goes on to say, moreover, that even in the category of oracular statements "which are clear enough to need no interpreters . . . a similar variety of effect and human reaction may be observed." One of these various effects which Knox mentions is that the prophecy "might actually be symbolically fulfilled,"<sup>3</sup> but he does not consider the possibility of either an ambiguous prophecy or a symbolic fulfillment in the *Oedipus Tyrannus*.

As we have seen, Dio Chrysostom takes for granted that the prophecy to Laius is ambiguous, and, though his interpretation of this warning is questionable, especially as it applies to Sophocles' play, he poses the problem which other critics, by taking the prophecy literally, have avoided: what did the oracle mean? The plot of the *Oedipus Tyrannus* is concerned with three oracular pronouncements. The prophecies to Laius and Oedipus have been made before the events of the drama, but their real meaning becomes clear only at its end and only as a result of Oedipus' effort to understand the meaning of a third oracular utterance, which is reported by Creon at the beginning of the play and which directs its entire action. Thus, the play must be studied in connection with the tradition of oracular prophecies, to which it is closely related. Moreover, all of the prophecies with which the action of the *Oedipus Tyrannus* deals have to do with the replacement of a father by a son, an old king by a new one. The traditional patterns of this familiar story provide further clues to the play and help to elucidate not only the meaning of the oracles but the characters in relation to their destinies. A close reading of the *Oedipus Tyrannus* in connection with its background in oracular prophecy and ancient kingship will indicate that the oracles in the play speak ambiguously and symbolically, and that the failure of both Laius and Oedipus to understand these oracles, who speak not only to them but

<sup>3</sup> Knox, pp. 35-47.



for them,<sup>4</sup> is an indication of their unwillingness to face their human limitations. Oedipus, through an investigation of the meaning of the third oracular utterance, finally learns the truth he earlier chose to avoid, and in understanding the oracle comes to know himself.

### II

A brief glance at a few typical oracular prophecies gives some insight into the general nature of the form and the methods of interpretation. The following examples, though necessarily brief, will provide a background of oracular responses and the reactions of the recipients, against which we may measure the prophecies to Laius and Oedipus and the manner in which they react to them.

Socrates, of course, best exemplifies the proper treatment of an oracular message. When Chaerephon reported to Socrates that the oracle of Delphi had told him that no one was wiser than Socrates, Socrates' first response was, "What can the god mean? And what is the interpretation of his riddle?" He considered this question for a long time and then sought among many men to find one wiser than he. Finally, after a great deal of thought and trouble, he arrived at a solution to the riddle. It applied not only to him, but to all men. The god had not made merely a literal or factual statement, but as Socrates said: "By his answer he intends to show that the wisdom of men is worth little or nothing; he is not speaking of Socrates, he is only using my name by way of illustration, as if he said 'He, O men, is the wisest, who, like Socrates, knows that his wisdom is in truth worth nothing'" (Plato, *Apology*, tr. Jowett). It is important to note that though the oracle speaks only of Socrates, it is actually making a general statement. Furthermore, Socrates' great wisdom and humility make it possible for him to understand that the statement does not set him apart from other men, as it would seem to, but rather makes of him an example of the wisdom that all men can attain through honest appraisal of themselves.

<sup>4</sup> "In the great majority of cases the content of the oracle tells us as much about the character as it does about divine will or fate" (Kirkwood, p. 78).

But Socrates' response to the oracle is unusual. More often the recipients, like Cylon or Hippias, both of whom wished to conquer Athens, misinterpret the oracle's pronouncements out of folly or egotism. Cylon's pride in a past Olympic victory misled him, and his interpretation of the oracle's message sent the "unwary egotist"<sup>5</sup> to his death (Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, I, 126). Hippias was also defeated because he misunderstood a prophecy. In a prophetic dream he had sexual relations with his mother. His interpretation of this dream reveals his wish: it meant, he assumed, that he would return to Athens, regain his lost power, and live to a ripe old age in his motherland. When he lost a tooth on Attic soil, however, Hippias realized: "All my share in it [the land] is the portion of which my tooth has possession," and thus the prophecy was fulfilled (Herodotus, *The Persian Wars*, tr. George Rawlinson, VII, 107). The prophetic dream was clearly a symbolic one, and it was to be fulfilled not literally but symbolically. The dream symbol suggested to the dreamer possession of his land, but he did not foresee the possibility of possession as a symbol of defeat. The prophecy did come true; Hippias did gain a share in the land. However, the share was sufficient only to serve as a symbol of his failure to conquer the land of Athens.

Prophetic dreams are treated like oracular warnings in ancient Greek literature. Though they are sent by some outside agent, usually Zeus or some other god, both their contents and the interpretations given them reveal a great deal about the recipient. Like oracular prophecies, they sometimes challenge the recipient and test his intelligence as well as his character, for they are often as obscure as oracles. "The oracle," says Heraclitus, "does not tell or conceal, but indicates" (Fr. 93), and the same may be said of many dreams.

The examples given here are but a few of the great number of dreams and oracular prophecies recorded in ancient Greek literature which are both symbolic and obscure. Parke and Wormell in their book, *The Delphic Oracle*, say that

<sup>5</sup> *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion* (New York, Meridian Books, 1955), p. 13.



"... obscurity was an essential element in this literary genre. . . . A noticeable feature of the Delphic oracle is the use of concrete pictorial images for abstractions,"<sup>6</sup> and they provide many examples of symbolic warnings, interpreted both correctly and incorrectly by their recipients.

The prophecy of the oracle to Laius seems more shocking to the modern audience than it did to the ancient. According to Parke and Wormell, one of the major subjects "... for mythological oracles was marriage and children. Here no doubt legend mirrored everyday fact. . . . If the myths convey anything like a true impression of the Pythian Apollo's usual answer, the would-be father must frequently have met with bitter discouragement. For the stock motive in such legends is that the gods will grant a son or grandson, but he will cause the death of the enquirer."<sup>7</sup>

The very frequency of this reply suggests that as myth it is certainly to be taken in the obvious symbolic sense: since the decline of the old is simultaneous with the growth and maturity of the young, the old father is inevitably to be overcome and replaced, first in unconscious wish and then in reality by the young son. Thus, this common prophecy seems to present a "concrete pictorial image" of the rivalry between father and son characteristic of a patriarchal society. E. R. Dodds indicates that an understanding of the father-son relationship is basic in any study of the social structure of the ancient Greek community:

The family was the keystone of the archaic social structure, the first organized unit, the first domain of law. Its organization, as in all Indo-European societies, was patriarchal; its law was *patria potestas*. The head of a household is its king, *οἶκος ἀναξ*; and his position is described by Aristotle as analogous to that of a king. Over his children his authority is in early times unlimited; he is free to expose them in infancy, and in manhood to expel an erring or rebellious son from the community. . . . In relation to his father the son had duties but no rights; while his father lived, he was a perpetual minor

<sup>6</sup> H. W. Parke and D. E. W. Wormell, *The Delphic Oracle* (Oxford, 1956), II, xxiv-xxvi.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 298.

—a state of affairs which lasted at Athens down to the sixth century, when Solon introduced certain safeguards.

Dodds goes on to discuss the "growing claim of the individual to personal rights and personal responsibilities" which led to "those internal tensions . . . which have so long characterized family life in Western societies. The peculiar horror with which the Greeks viewed offenses against a father, and the peculiar religious sanctions to which the offender was thought to be exposed are themselves suggestive of strong repressions."<sup>8</sup>

The common occurrence of oracular prophecies to "kings of the household" that they will be slain by their sons is another clear sign of this wide-spread conflict between father and son in ancient Greek society. Certainly such a prophecy to an actual king, whose power would be much greater than that of the average man and whose rule would generally be more repressive, indicates even more obviously the king's fear of his approaching rival. Moreover, the whole tradition of kingship in ancient society is marked by strong competition, as manifested in both actual and ritual combat for the throne.

Early Greek kings took over some of the attributes and functions of Zeus, as god of both sky and earth.<sup>9</sup> The king was the "human representative" of Zeus, and as such participated in either a real or a ceremonial contest similar to the one in which Zeus won the kingship from Cronos, which is described by Pausanias, who tells of how Zeus and Cronos *παλαίισαι* (wrestled) for the throne (*Description of Greece* V,7). "The community in early days had a simple method of securing the best man for the post of king. The king reigned till a stronger than he arose and slew him."

It is evident that the king and his opponent for the throne often engaged in some type of athletic contest, one of the

<sup>8</sup> E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Boston, Beacon Paperback edition, 1957), pp. 45-46.

<sup>9</sup> The chief source of my information on the king as representative of Zeus is A. B. Cook, *Zeus, A Study of Ancient Religion* (Cambridge, 1925). All quoted material on competition for kingship is taken from two articles by the same author: "The European Sky-God," *Folk-Lore* XV (Sept. 1904), 264-315; "The European Sky-God II," *Folk-Lore* XV (December, 1904), 370-426.

most common being a wrestling match. Phorbas challenged all "... wayfarers in the prime of life to an athletic contest, wrestling or running the pancratium or quoit-throwing; and having vanquished them, he cut off their heads." Cook says there can "... be little doubt that Phorbas was a king who personated an oak-god and, in accordance with the primitive rule, defended his title against all comers." Other examples of kings who engaged in wrestling matches against contestants for the throne are Cercyon of Eleusis, Antaeus, "a gigantic Lybian king," and Eryx, who was defeated by Heracles. Other kings, such as Amycus of the Bebryces, engaged in boxing matches or in various sorts of contests. One of the best known is the chariot race in which Pelops defeated Oenomaus. In fact, Cook gives a good deal of evidence to support his view that the great public games at Elis and Delphi were "... at first merely a means of selecting the man best fitted to become the priestly king of the locality in which they were held."<sup>10</sup>

In later times the actual physical threat to the king no longer existed. Either the tenure of his rule was limited by law or the contest became a ritual combat, a sham fight rather than an actual fight to the death.<sup>11</sup> Competition, however, remains associated with succession to kingship, and therefore it is not surprising that Laius, who "perhaps passed for a human Zeus,"<sup>12</sup> should be warned by the oracle that he would be killed by his son. The prophecy can be taken as no more than a symbolic warning of what he must expect, not necessarily in a literal sense but perhaps in a ritual ceremony in which the old king would be replaced by the new one, and, certainly, in the inevitable cycle of human life.

### III

When the *Oedipus Tyrannus* of Sophocles is examined in the light of this background on ancient oracles and ancient king-

<sup>10</sup> "The European Sky-God II," p. 402 and passim. See also F. M. Cornford, "The Origin of the Olympic Games," in Jane Harrison, *Themis* (Cambridge, 1912), pp. 212-59.

<sup>11</sup> Theodor H. Gaster, ed., James Frazer, *The New Golden Bough* (New York, 1959), p. 233; Lord Raglan, *The Hero* (New York, 1956), p. 191; A. M. Hocart, *Kingship* (Oxford, 1927), pp. 70-71.

<sup>12</sup> Cook, "The European Sky-God II," p. 389.

ship, it becomes clear that the ambiguous and symbolic character of the oracular prophecies, taken for granted by Sophocles and his contemporaries, though not explicitly mentioned in the play, is none the less clearly indicated. Moreover, an understanding of the meaning of these prophecies reveals the intrinsic relationship between the political and personal themes: the competition for kingship and the discovery of the self.

The oracular utterance which we hear about first in the play has been delivered to Creon, and like most such statements it directs but does not uncover. It tells of a "defiling thing"<sup>13</sup> which must be discovered. After Oedipus has threatened the unknown slayer of Laius and those who may know his identity, the chorus says: "As for the question, it was for Phoebus, who sent it, to tell us this thing—who can have wrought the deed." And Oedipus replies: "Justly said; but no man on earth can force the gods to what they will not" (ll. 278-81). In one sense the whole play deals with the attempt to uncover the facts to which the oracle's utterance leads. Only at the end of the play is the statement delivered to Creon at the beginning clear. Not till then it is known that Thebes has been "defiled" by more than murder, the first and most obvious interpretation of the oracle's message; incest, the second element of evil, is not even considered in the early attempts to follow the direction of the oracle. The quest for the identity of the murderer leads to a discovery of parricide and incest. The "defiling thing" is revealed only after Oedipus' agonizing search into himself, a search which he has been reluctant to undertake, though once having begun it, he is unable to stop until he knows the truth.

Oedipus begins this search late in life. An earlier opportunity for self-knowledge came when, as he himself reports, he was told by a man at a banquet that he was not "the true son of [his] sire" (ll. 779-80). He went to Delphi to find out who his parents were, but instead of answering his question

<sup>13</sup> Sophocles, *The Plays and Fragments, with Critical Commentary, and Translation in English Prose*, by Richard C. Jebb (Cambridge, 1914), I, 25, l. 97. All subsequent quotations from the play will be taken from this edition, and unless otherwise noted, will be given in Jebb's translation.

directly, the oracle said that he "was fated to defile [his] mother's bed," to produce a brood which men could not bear to look on, and to be the slayer of his father (ll. 791-93).

Oedipus's response to the oracle's prophecy is flight. He seeks to escape his fate by fleeing from the presence of his parents. In this way, without knowing that he is doing so, he is behaving like his true father, Laius. When Laius was told that he must die by the hand of his son, he did not deliberate over the meaning of this prophecy, but simply took it literally and tried to avoid it. Taking the prophecy literally provided a justification for exposing the child, but actually it was a means of avoiding his destiny, which did not differ from the destiny of any man faced with the hostile competition of his son. Laius, in attempting to escape his fate, attempted also to avoid the limitations of manhood and kingship. His failure was inevitable, and, ironically, on a second visit to Delphi, he was killed by his son, who replaced him.

Like his father, Oedipus never stops to consider the meaning of the oracle's prophecy, which comes from an outside agent but is, like a dream, also a voice from within. His original question to the oracle regarding his parents is actually a question about himself, since he is seeking his origins. The connection between the question he asks and the answer he receives is clear, though Oedipus does not see it (ll. 788-89). He is seeking knowledge of his closest relationships, and the oracle tells him more about these than he wishes to accept. Oedipus is warned that his relationship with his parents must be a complicated and frightening one of love and hate, of desire for possession and destruction. The killing of the father can be taken as a symbolic representation of the inevitable competition and replacement discussed earlier. The sexual union with his mother, another common dream and prophecy, is no doubt related to the conflict with the father.<sup>14</sup> Cook points out that it is common for the victor in a contest between king and challenger to receive not only the kingdom but the wife or daughter of the old king as well.<sup>15</sup> Moreover,

<sup>14</sup> See Carl Robert, *Oedipus* (Berlin, 1915), I, 44-46; 58.

<sup>15</sup> "The European Sky-God II," p. 379.

having sexual relations with one's mother in dream or prophecy is commonly interpreted to mean possession of the land. Since the prophecy of incest in Oedipus' case follows immediately upon the prophecy of parricide, incest here seems to suggest possession of both the land and the wife, for both would be desired by the competitor for Laius' kingdom and his personal power.

If the prophecy is taken symbolically, Oedipus merely learns that like all men he must engage in hostile competition with his father. Since he is the son of a king, his problem is magnified; it exists on both a personal and a social level. But Oedipus cannot face the terrible knowledge of his own desires, externalized and given concrete form through the voice of the oracle. His flight is an example of *hybris*, the sin or weakness—for it is treated as both in Greek literature—which makes a man incapable of accepting human limitations. Like the acquaintance of Diogenes, Oedipus does not know himself, and thus he cannot know or use a god. In refusing to examine the riddle contained in the prophecy he is rejecting an opportunity for self-knowledge.

Socrates assumed that what seemed to be a direct statement from the oracle must be a riddle. "Oracles," say Parke and Wormell, "in fact are always close to riddles and often shade off into them. . . . The Greeks freely used αἰνιγμα and ἀνίσσασθαι of oracular responses, and the Pythia, fully conscious of her obscurity, frequently enjoins her interrogators to ponder her words. . . ." <sup>16</sup> In this respect the oracle is like the Sphinx. Sophocles, who called the Sphinx χρησμοδόν (l. 1199), which Knox translates "an oracle-chanting maiden" (p. 20), establishes an important dramatic relationship in the *Oedipus Tyrannus* between the Sphinx and the oracle, two forces which challenge the intellect of man. Though Oedipus failed to understand the riddle the oracle presented to him about himself, he undertakes to solve the riddle of man, posed by the Sphinx. Once more one is reminded of Diogenes' warning to his friend on the road to Delphi: he who does not know himself cannot understand man.

<sup>16</sup> II, xxvi-xxviii.



The significance of Oedipus' reply to the Sphinx, his pride in it, and Teiresias' mockery of his success as a solver of riddles cannot be understood except in relation to the first riddle presented to Oedipus, the riddle of himself. In the play we learn a good deal about Oedipus' background and character before we hear about the prophecy which made him flee Corinth. Thus, we are prepared to judge his attitude toward the prophecy in the light of his solution to the riddle of the Sphinx, his pride in that solution, his attitude toward the new oracular response regarding the "defiling thing" to be uncovered, and his treatment of Teiresias, the seer.

The first reference to Oedipus' solution of the riddle of the Sphinx is made by the priest of Zeus, who, speaking in behalf of the suppliants and the other citizens of Thebes, asks Oedipus to help deliver them from the plague which is destroying the city. He praises Oedipus, calling him "first of men" who freed the Thebans from the "hard songstress," but only after he has said that he does not rank Oedipus among the gods (ll. 31-36). This statement establishes the preeminence of Oedipus in intellect and courage, but it also sets his achievements in proper perspective: his is the greatness of man, not of the gods. Implicit in the praise is a reference to his limitations.

Oedipus himself mentions his victory over the Sphinx three times. Twice he brings up the subject himself (l. 132; ll. 396-99), and the last time he merely responds to Teiresias' ironic reminder of his skill at solving riddles (l. 441; l. 443). His first reference to the Sphinx occurs in his reply to Creon's explanation as to why the murder of Laius was not investigated immediately. Oedipus says: "Nay, I will start afresh, and once more make dark things plain" (l. 132). Confident in his ability to uncover the destructive secret, he begins his quest with a curse on the slayer or anyone who protects him. The chorus suggests that since Teiresias is "most like to our lord Phoebus," Oedipus send to him for help in clarifying Apollo's statement, and Oedipus replies that he has already followed Creon's suggestion and sent for Teiresias (ll. 284-89).

The scene between Oedipus and Teiresias indicates that despite Oedipus' declarations about his desire to unravel the oracular response regarding the slayer of Laius, he is clearly reluctant to face all of its implications. At first he welcomes Teiresias and the knowledge he hopes the seer will bring, for Oedipus believes that he wants the truth at any cost. It is not long, however, before he turns away from the truth even when it is thrust directly at him. Like all men, Oedipus both wants to know reality and at the same time cannot bear to face the harshest aspects of it, especially those which involve him.

Even Teiresias is not exempt from this human limitation. In his characterization of Teiresias Sophocles again implies this theme—the capacity of man to overlook or refuse to recognize what he does know. Teiresias' first words are: "Alas, how dreadful to have wisdom where it profits not the wise! Aye, I knew this well, but let it slip out of my mind; else would I never have come here" (ll. 316-18). He wishes to reveal what he knows and, at the same time, he hesitates to do so. But even in his refusal there is the beginning of revelation: "Let me go home; most easily wilt thou bear thine own burden to the end, and I mine, if thou wilt consent" (ll. 320-21).

Oedipus overlooks this reference to his "burden" and instead takes Teiresias' comment as unfriendly to the state. Teiresias hints more broadly in his next remarks: "Aye, for ye are all without knowledge; but never will I reveal my griefs—that I say not thine" (ll. 328-29). But Oedipus continues to harp on Teiresias' attitude toward the state, refusing to hear the hints about the danger to him of further revelation. Even when Teiresias says concretely and directly: "Thou art the accursed defiler of this land" (l. 353) and "Thou art the slayer of the man whose slayer thou seekest" (l. 362), Oedipus' answer is that whatever Teiresias says will be said in vain. When Teiresias goes on to say: "Thou hast been living in unguessed shame with thy nearest kin" (l. 366), Oedipus assumes that this is another meaningless insult. By clinging to the fantasy that Teiresias and Creon are plotting

against his throne, he avoids the obvious meaning of Teiresias' remarks, just as he tried to avoid the inevitable truth of the earlier oracular warning by fleeing from Corinth.

The scene with Teiresias is a dramatic enactment of Oedipus' response to the oracular prophecy, which is merely reported by Oedipus later on in the play. When he ignores the meaning of Teiresias' first veiled hints and even his open and direct statements, he is actually repeating the behavior which led him to Thebes; just as he fled from the meaning of the prophecy, so he turns away from the seer. It is Teiresias, moreover, who provokes Oedipus to boast about his solution of the riddle of the Sphinx and Teiresias who regards that much-heralded solution with proper perspective.

Oedipus' attack on Teiresias' blindness is obviously an ironic disclosure of his own moral and intellectual blindness. Thus, his boasting about his "wit" in his second reference to the solution of the riddle (l. 398), which follows this attack, diminishes his accomplishment, for the audience is forced to realize that the answer "man," with which he solved the riddle of the Sphinx, reveals only the most superficial knowledge, and that in fact he is ignorant of the more significant and more difficult riddle of himself and all men. Oedipus' answer to the Sphinx exemplifies the narrow dimensions of man's victories; it is evidence of what Socrates understood very well—the limitations of the knowledge given even to the wisest of men, which Oedipus has not yet faced. When Oedipus says to Teiresias: "What riddles, what dark words thou always speakest," Teiresias replies ironically: "Nay, art thou not most skilled to unravel dark speech?" (ll. 437-38.) He is commenting not only on the value of Oedipus' solution to the riddle of the Sphinx but on Oedipus' inability to understand his own nature.

His attitude toward Creon is further evidence of Oedipus' unwillingness to face the truth. On the basis of no facts he concludes that Creon is a traitor, "the proved assassin, . . . the palpable robber" (l. 534). By accusing Creon of engaging in a treasonous conspiracy with Teiresias, he avoids facing the possibility of his own guilt, which Teiresias has

implied. Creon urges Oedipus to "judge for thyself on knowledge" (l. 544), but he will not listen. He insists that Creon is his "malignant foe" (l. 546) and wishes to have him killed.

Oedipus does, however, listen to Jocasta, and it is she who despite herself leads him to his self-discovery. Knox makes much of Jocasta's rejection of oracles, for he views this attitude as an indication of skepticism about the gods, which he feels is an important theme of the play (pp. 171-78). But one must not overlook the fact that both gods and oracles in Greek literature function on a double level: they actually exist, but they are also expressions of the inner man.<sup>17</sup> Oracles, especially, must be regarded in this way since they deal with secrets revealed to human beings as essential clues to their characters and destinies. Jocasta, in denying the validity of oracles, denies man's capacity to see within himself. "'Tis best to live at random" (l. 979), is her advice. When Oedipus tells her that he fears the prophecy that he will have sexual relations with his mother, she advises him not to be afraid, for "many men ere now have so fared in dreams also" (ll. 981-82), suggesting the universality of the prediction and the improbability of its being literally enacted. At the same time she reveals her inability to grasp the importance of oracular messages, the voice of the inner self. Such messages, she feels, should be disregarded: "he to whom these things are as nought bears his life most easily" (ll. 982-83).<sup>18</sup>

Both she and Oedipus have little curiosity about the oracle except in so far as it threatens them in the most literal sense. When Oedipus hears the news of Polybus' death, he says: "But he is dead, and hid already beneath the earth; and here am I, who have not put hand to spear.—Unless, perchance, he was killed by longing for me: thus, indeed, I should be the cause of his death. But the oracles as they stand, at

<sup>17</sup> See Dodds, pp. 10-11 and 30-31; also Cedric Whitman, who says: "To a Greek, to say that a god helped [Oedipus] was only a way of saying that he was superhumanly wise" (p. 130).

<sup>18</sup> Kitto's comment on this passage is extremely interesting in connection with all the remarks on Jocasta's skepticism. Kitto describes her statement as "... a doctrine which would deny the very basis of all serious Greek thought; for while Greek life was still healthy and stable, the Greek believed, as if by instinct, that the universe was not chaotic and 'irrational', but was based on a *logos*, obeyed Law" (*Greek Tragedy* [New York, Anchor Books, 1954], p. 148).

least, Polybus hath swept with him to his rest in Hades: they are worth nought" (ll. 967-72). Jebb interprets these lines to mean that Polybus' death "has carried off with him" the oracular prophecies: "even supposing that they have been fulfilled in some indirect and figurative sense, they certainly have not been fulfilled to the letter" (note to line 971). When for a moment Oedipus does consider the possibility of a symbolic interpretation, he treats it lightly; it hardly matters to him since it implies no immediate danger. It is, of course, too late for Oedipus to try to foresee the future; he has only the past to discover. At this point in his life his future is limited almost entirely by the errors of his past, for, like his father, motivated by pride, he helped to bring about the most dreadful of the many possibilities contained in the oracular prophecy.

## IV

It has been suggested above that the competition between Laius and Oedipus is intensified by the fact that they are not only father and son but also king and successor. The potential social and personal dangers inherent in this rivalry are made explicit in the choral ode following Oedipus' expression of his fears that it is he who has killed Laius (ll. 863-910). This stasimon, which is commonly regarded as one of the chief problems of the play, is best interpreted on several levels: on one as an expression of the chorus' limited understanding of the events it is witnessing, and on another, as a more general statement through which the chorus suggests more than it knows, one of the dramatist's methods of conveying dramatic irony. This ode also demonstrates an important point which is made by Francis Fergusson in *The Idea of a Theater*: "Oedipus, we now see, is both myth and ritual. It assumes and employs these two ancient ways of understanding and representing human experience."<sup>10</sup> While it is a mistake to interpret any play as though it were a ritual, for drama is an art, not merely a vehicle for religious expression, in the case of the *Oedipus Tyrannus* the myth so ob-

<sup>10</sup> *The Idea of a Theater* (Princeton, 1949), p. 26.

viously contains remnants of its ritual origins that to ignore them is to dismiss material which elucidates the meaning of the play. This ode contains a specific reference to the present fears of Oedipus, a general statement which relates the destiny of Oedipus to that of all men, and an evocation of the old ritual contest between king and successor, which the myth and the play strongly suggest.

A short time before the chorus of Theban elders recites this stasimon, it tries to comfort Oedipus, telling him to "have hope, until at least thou hast gained full knowledge from him who saw the deed" (ll. 834-35). In the first strophe, which is a prayer for innocence, the elders make some conventional remarks about honoring the gods and obeying divine laws. Faced with the possible guilt of Oedipus, they pray for their own innocence, and in so doing convey the feeling, which is later stated explicitly (l. 1193), that he is an example, that his fate is a warning to others. Through this ritual song the chorus asks to be excluded from guilt because the guilt of Oedipus reminds it of its own vulnerability.

"*Hybris* begets the tyrant" is the literal meaning of ὕβρις φτενέει τύραννον, the beginning of the first antistrophe. The next nine lines develop this idea:

Insolence, once vainly surfeited on wealth that is not meet nor good for it, when it hath scaled the topmost ramparts, is hurled to a dire doom, wherein no service of the feet can serve. But I pray that the god never quell such rivalry as benefits the State; the god will I ever hold for our protector.

Most critics are puzzled by these lines because they seem to make only general statements about the nature of the tyrant and to have no direct application to Oedipus and his fears. Yet the reference to both Laius and Oedipus is plain enough. Though the chorus does not yet know or understand the dreadful outcome of Laius' act of *hybris*, it is troubled by the possibility that Oedipus has come to power by unlawful means, as a result of *hybris* rather than through the lawful competition emphasized in the last few lines. But this is only one of the meanings of the antistrophe. The chorus also im-



plies a meaning beyond its own present comprehension, which the audience is prepared to understand. In the verb φυνεύει, which means to beget (offspring) as well as to produce or bring about, there seems to be a reference to Laius, the man of *hybris*, who begot in both a literal and a figurative sense, the *tyrannos* who was to destroy him. Furthermore, the *hybris*, the intellectual blindness and arrogance, of the son helped to gain him the role of *tyrannos* rather than that of lawful successor.

The basic problem presented by the concluding lines of the antistrophe is the meaning of the chorus' prayer for lawful rivalry, which it regards as beneficial to the state. The word which Jebb and others translate as rivalry is πάλισμα, literally, a wrestling match. Throughout the ode the chorus contrasts disorder with order, violence with law. The "wrestling match" becomes clear if it is taken not as a mere figure of speech but as a reference to the ritual contest between the old god and the new, between king and successor, to which this play is related and which helps to explain its central conflict.

It has been shown that the wrestling match was a traditional means by which mythical kings seized power. Pausanias, in describing the contest for the throne between Cronos and Zeus, uses παλῆσαι, the verb form of the word πάλισμα, used here by the chorus. No doubt, some type of ritual contest related to this mythical wrestling match continued to be practiced in Greece, even when the succession became hereditary and the contest a mere symbol. The chorus, in asking for "a wrestling match which is good for the state" as opposed to *hybris*, which it condemns, seems to be asking for a return to a traditional ritual of lawful replacement, a ritual contest rather than a real one, in which blood is shed. It prays for a restoration of the traditional, safe way of life, as opposed to the present chaos and suffering which have resulted from the murder of Laius. The symbolic and lawful "wrestling match" contrasted with lawless and violent competition brings to the mind of the audience the distinction between the symbolic meaning of the prophecies to Laius and Oedipus, which offered a warning, a possible control over irrational impulses,

and the literal meaning, which is personally abhorrent and socially destructive.

The second strophe emphasizes the need for justice and reverence for the gods, and once again mentions fair and unfair competition:

But if any man walks haughtily in deed or word, with no fear of Justice, no reverence for the images of gods, may an evil doom seize him for his ill-starred pride, if he will not win his vantage fairly, nor keep him from unholy deeds, but must lay profaning hands on sanctities.

The old religious rituals, acceptable to the gods, expressed violent feelings in symbolic terms. The fear for loss of religious reverence in this second strophe and in the second antistrophe seems justified by the possibility that Oedipus has committed an act of unlicensed violence, a sign that the established religion is threatened. Thus, at the end of the second strophe, the chorus asks: "Nay, if such deeds are in honor, wherefore should we join in the sacred dance?" Why do we participate in our own religious rite when its spirit and meaning are no longer respected?

Religious ritual and political competition are clearly connected in this stasimon, in which unfair political competition is regarded as a threat to orthodox religion. This connection is a natural one in the light of the religious origins of kingship and the traditional ceremonies associated with it, and it is hard to understand how one can "discover" in this stasimon "... the features of a code of belief and behaviour which is opposed to all only man-made beliefs and rules."<sup>20</sup> Not only this stasimon but the *Oedipus Tyrannus* as a whole has been offered as evidence that Sophocles has turned away from the skepticism current in his time and has reaffirmed his faith in the gods. The play has been regarded as a lesson to man that he must live according to the dictates and standards of the gods rather than those of man.<sup>21</sup> Such a point of view sets up

<sup>20</sup> Ehrenberg, p. 35.

<sup>21</sup> This point of view is stated most baldly in Ehrenberg's book, but it is implicit in Knox and other contemporary scholars. For example, Fergusson says: "The 'epiphany' in *Oedipus*, the final tableau of the blind old man with his incestuous brood, merely conveys the moral truth which underlies the ac-

a false dichotomy. Throughout the play the gods and men are not in opposition. Moreover, as in much of Greek literature, it is not always possible or necessary to make a distinction between the standards of the gods and those of men.

### V

The interpretation of the play as first a rejection and then an acceptance of divine will seems to ignore the very material of the play. What then is the significance of Oedipus' particular crime? What is the connection between the contents of the oracular prophecies and the whole question of religious skepticism? The crimes of Oedipus and the agony he suffers in facing himself give us an insight into man in his most human and most personal relationships. Oedipus has not committed murder and incest because he is irreligious; rather his crimes, which result from human weakness and not from a lack of religious conviction, are a source of concern to both the gods and his fellow citizens, as the chorus makes especially clear in the stasimon discussed above. When man violates the laws of his society he offends the gods, but the play deals with much more than man's acceptance of divine law. If Oedipus has rejected the gods in first fleeing from and then scoffing at the oracles, he has also rejected the problems of man. He has, indeed, rejected himself. Apollo does not say: "Know me"; he says, "Know thyself" and the limits of manhood. Knowing oneself is a way of worshiping Apollo.

In the *Oedipus Tyrannus* the gods are on the side of rational man, but they are wiser than man in their awareness of the limitations of his reason and his propensity to lawlessness and self-delusion. To the very end of the play Oedipus is both eager and reluctant to find out the truth about himself. When Jocasta already knows who he is and cries out: "Ill-fated one! Mayst thou never come to know who thou art!" (l. 1068), Oedipus refuses to recognize the true meaning of her distress. Once again, in a last tragic effort to avoid the truth, he turns on her as he has previously turned on

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tion, and implies the analogue: human dependence upon a mysterious and divine order of nature" (pp. 45-46).

Teiresias and Creon, and without any evidence, concludes that because of her pride in her "princely stock" she rejects his "base source" (ll. 1070-79). The double meaning of the phrase ironically conveys both his self-deception and the painful truth which he must soon learn.

One of the most important themes of the *Oedipus Tyrannus* is that man's approach to truth is difficult and even at best indirect. Despite all the instances one can find to show how Oedipus turns away from knowledge, he is more heroic than most men in his struggle to attain it. The price he is willing to pay, the acknowledgement of his own crimes, is also his reward, self-knowledge. He comes to it late, through a search into the meaning of the oracular message reported to him by Creon. This time his desire to learn the truth is greater than his need to flee from it.

Oedipus accepts the responsibility for his acts; he knows he has doomed himself (l. 1381) to a life of shame and exile. He tears out his eyes because they "failed in knowledge" (ll. 1267-74), for he realizes how long he has turned away from the very knowledge he has sought. To the extent that Oedipus fails to heed the oracular warnings he is responsible for his deeds, but he can hardly be called guilty. In some respects he is the victim of the *hybris* of his father, but essentially he is the victim of his own limitations, the blindness and helplessness of man involved in problems he understands only dimly. Yet, if it is man's destiny to be limited by the dark and irrational elements within him, it is also his destiny to hear the voice of the oracle and within his capacity to understand what it says. Oedipus' fate is a warning that the search for knowledge is painful and sometimes terrifying, for it is successful only when man perceives the limitations of his vision. But in this search man also discovers resources of which he himself was previously unaware: a capacity for intellectual honesty which overcomes the pride that prohibits it, and a power of endurance which exalts him and those who, as chorus or audience, are involved in his destiny.

# PIERS PLOWMAN AS A FOURTEENTH-CENTURY APOCALYPSE\*

*Morton W. Bloomfield*

## I

PROFESSOR C. VANN WOODWARD, the distinguished authority on American history, in a recent address, later printed, on the necessity of interpretations and analyses of new historical problems and issues by his fellow-historians, makes, towards the end of this interesting talk, the following point about our own times:

The new age bears another and more ominous gift for the historian, one that has not been conspicuous in historical writings since the works of the Christian fathers. This gift is the element of the catastrophic. The Church fathers, with their apocalyptic historiography, understood the dramatic advantage possessed by the storyteller who can keep his audience sitting on the edge of eternity. The modern secular historian, after submitting to a long cycle of historicism, has at last had this dramatic advantage restored. The restoration, to be sure, arrived under scientific rather than apocalyptic auspices. But the dramatic potentials were scarcely diminished by placing in human hands at one and the same time the Promethean fire as well as the divine prerogative of putting an end to the whole drama of human history.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Woodward is here stressing the advantages which our age offers for the writing of dramatic history. For the first time since the Middle Ages, historians as a whole can with justice be convinced of an appalling catastrophe hanging over the world and may use this threatening possibility to write with a fervor and sense of doom such as the Church Fathers possessed when writing of human history. Since the sixteenth

\* This paper is based on a lecture first given at the Modern Language Association convention in Philadelphia, December, 1960.

<sup>1</sup> "The Age of Reinterpretation," *AHR.*, LXVI (1960-61), 19.

century or even earlier, only a few historians could write their histories as if an end of human history could soon be expected.

This is a good point, and I hope modern historians may give heed to this advice from one of their number and inject more life and vitality into their work. Other professional scholars could also benefit by this advice. It seems to me, however, that there is another advantage, if such is the right word, to be gained from the history of our own time—a new ability to understand literary works and human beings of the past, obsessed or deeply concerned with the imminence of the end of human history by divine intervention. In short, we may now begin to understand anew the apocalyptic and eschatological element in the past.

There is evidence indeed that such is happening. Modern existentialistic theology is much concerned with the apocalyptic and eschatological. The apocalyptic interpretation or re-interpretation of Jesus' teachings and of early Christianity has by now almost become a common-place. The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls has revealed the apocalyptic views of a Jewish sect, probably the Essenes, which flourished around the period of Jesus' life. Other Jewish apocalypses are also known. Christianity seems to have arisen out of a similar small Hebrew apocalyptic sect or at least found favor at first among those who believed that the end of the world was near and that a Messiah would come to prepare the elect for the Day of Judgment. This new knowledge explains much in the New Testament and earliest Christian writings.

As a result of all this, we can now reread certain apocalyptic writers of the past in a new light. All thinking men have been forced to consider the possible end of human existence on earth. In the past, since the Renaissance, this concern was always limited to the few. We can now better understand the implications of the Day of Judgment in the older Judeo-Christian tradition. The apocalyptic and catastrophic is not merely evidence of human aberration or eccentricity but a continuing and serious aspect of the human story. It is true that today it may be science and human nature rather than



God which will destroy us all, but God may be working through science, and in any case the destruction of the world, if it comes, will be the same, whatever the cause.

It is true, of course, that apocalyptic thinkers were often eccentric and even mad, but we can at least see them as concerned with certain fundamental problems of humanity, no matter how wild their theorizings and beliefs may have been. The apocalyptic thinker is convinced that God's judgment hangs over the world and that it is his task to warn people because he can see correctly the signs of coming catastrophe, not always necessarily the end of the world.

In the Judeo-Christian tradition, the apocalyptic view of the world is enshrined in the dogma of the Resurrection and the Day of Judgment, but it also appears in other concepts and key notions such as those of the Kingdom of God, the Messiah, and Antichrist. The latter will lead the forces of evil and will be opposed by the Messiah or his representatives. In fact, all of history may be seen as a struggle between various Antichrists and various representatives of the elect and the chosen. The tradition, as we may even see in the New Testament, (*e.g.*, 1 John 2:18 and 2 John 7), admitted the possibility of various Antichrists. In the latter part of the Middle Ages, this belief in a plurality of Antichrists was widely held, and, at the end of time there would be the greatest Antichrist of all. This period in history was especially rich in apocalyptic thinking of various sorts with paradoxical attitudes. We find in the fourteenth century a strong belief both in the imminent end of the world and in a great coming future after a time of troubles, a new age. In all this, some scholars have tried to find the medieval antecedents of the Renaissance.

As we pass from one age to another, there are persecutions of the righteous, widespread sin, and the advent of Antichrists; a time of troubles comes upon the world. But all for the ultimate purpose of renewal. The very sufferings of the age and of the church were proofs of the coming new age or of a profound reformation.

## II

This apocalyptic current is not the only one in the later Middle Ages, but it is an important one. It is in its terms that I think we can best understand the work of the fourteenth-century William Langland who wrote a very long poem in three versions called *Piers Plowman* between 1363 and 1386, usually designated A, B, and C. His apocalypticism, however, was centered around the ideas of order, moderation, and temperance. It was through these virtues practised by all groups in society, but above all by the friars, that he believed the crisis of his own time could be solved, so that a new age could dawn for humanity.

*Piers Plowman* is divided into two sections, the first called the *Visio* and the second the *Vita*. It relates the dreams of a rough, uncouth but yet self-conscious man named Will about the world around him, who seeks the meaning of the Christian life in this world. The *Visio* presents a picture of a corrupt society dominated by cupidity (personified as Lady Mede, that is Lady Reward) but which is attempting in a confused way to find the right way to God. Piers Plowman, a mysterious figure (who later in the poem turns out to be the human aspect of Christ), tries to help the world but fails. After this depressing picture, Will begins again in the *Vita* to search for an answer to his problems, in other words, for Christian perfection. The *Vita* is divided into three subsections, the life of Dogood, of Dobet(ter), and of Dobest. "Dogood" deals with Will's search for an authority within himself or in the world to answer his questions about Christian perfection and he is shunted from one authority to the other, but finally arrives at the answer that Dogood is to lead a life of humble poverty. In "Dobet," we are presented with the three Christian virtues of faith, hope, and charity; this section culminates in a treatment of the scene of Christ liberating the saints of the Old Testament from Hell, an event usually known in the tradition as the Harrowing of Hell. Here Christ appears in His majesty. "Dobest" returns to the society of Langland's own time, with which the poem began. Here we see the forces of Antichrist rife, and all seems to be

in a state of hopeless corruption. After various vivid descriptions, the poem ends on Conscience's setting out to find Piers Plowman again so that pride may be destroyed and the friars may have enough for their maintenance. Needless to say, as the above outline shows, this poem is difficult to interpret, and there have been various attempts to do so.

In recent years there has been a tendency to find in *Piers*, which is built around a quest by the hero Will, the journey of a mystic towards God, and perhaps in one sense this is true. But *Piers* is first of all socially oriented—that is, apocalyptic in its view of Christian perfection. History and society must come first as both the beginning and final sections of the poem show very clearly. The journey of the individual soul to God is perhaps also implied, but it is not central. It is Piers, not Will, who starting as a simple peasant becomes the human aspect of Christ. Piers, not Will, is deified. Will's quest is for the three "Do's"—Christian perfection—and he grows old in it, but he knows that Piers Plowman must be found by Conscience and returned to Holy Church, that is the society of Christians, before he can find his answer. He must, by a quest, cooperate with the grace which Piers represents and the Christ he stands for. But Piers is sought to save Holy Church, not primarily to save Will. And it is this which makes the poem basically an apocalyptic, not a mystical, poem. *Piers* is not fundamentally the story of the journey to God of the individual, and the three "Do's" of the *Vita* section are not fundamentally the purgative, illuminative, and unitive ways of the mystic but belong to an older tradition, a monastic one originally, of the states of Christian perfection which involve fundamentally the Kingdom of God.

Moreover, the fundamental symbol of the poem, Piers, and its attendant agricultural imagery, together with other important classes of images in the poem like those of food and clothing, all reinforce the apocalyptic point. Any poem thus organized must at the very least in a Christian society have eschatological aims in mind. Both in the Old and New Testaments, agricultural, food, and clothing imagery has a basic apocalyptic dimension.

Jesus' parables are full of these images. Jesus, interpreting his own parable of the tares, says: "He that soweth the good seed is the Son of Man; the field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; the enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels" (Matthew 13: 37-39).

The harvest is paradise or salvation, and those who tend it lead man to his proper end. Christ is the supreme harvester or plowman, and all plowmen to some extent are symbols of his true followers—priests, religious, or even laymen, who are creating or bringing in the harvest. The plow is the tool whereby He prepares the field of the world for His harvest of souls. Do-best, the concluding section of the poem, begins with a description of Pentecost, and Pentecost is the feast of the Church, of the mission of the Holy Ghost, and also the feast of the end of time, of the Church Triumphant.

Throughout the poem, we also find particular apocalyptic passages. The prologue of the *Visio* with its picture of a corrupted society which holds promise of renewal sets the tone from the beginning. Evil has corrupted Christian society and the church militant; yet out of evil good may come, for God allows evil to flourish and the Church to suffer while He plans for its rebirth and regeneration. Conscience in her great speech before the king—who is also an apocalyptic figure—breaks out into an apocalyptic vision (B III, 282 ff.). Langland's predilection for prophecies, usually of the most difficult kind for us, is further evidence of his apocalyptic frame of mind. Obscure prophecies are the stock-in-trade of all those who are convinced that history is soon about to undergo a profound change. They satisfy the love of the obscure and are a delight to those who look for self-justification and religious reform. To those convinced of their truth, they make sense out of the current miseries of history. They are also difficult to disprove and may be applied again and again *ad libitum*, not to say *ad nauseam*. Above all, they prove the superiority of redemptive to secular history. In a time of crisis, such as the later Middle Ages, they were very popular, especially

with those concerned with the writing of history. These enigmatic prophecies are of the essence of the apocalyptic view of life.

Closely related to the prophetic frame of mind is the tendency to find eschatological signs in natural phenomena, especially those of weather and the sky. These are not wanting in *Piers*, but to Langland contemporary social phenomena were his main signs. The current social evils provide the main evidence that a new or reformed age is about to dawn. The evils of his time afford the best proof to Langland that, if God and His Church are realities, and to him there could be no doubt on these matters, good was to come out of evil. The persecution of the just and of the true church was a fundamental proof of their coming rehabilitation. Fundamentally, Langland, like all millenarians, was an optimist.

Omitting for lack of time the many other apocalyptic passages, or passages which have an apocalyptic dimension in the poem, I should like to point out that the culmination of the poem from Passus XVIII in "Dobet" to the end is openly apocalyptic. The Harrowing of Hell scene is a foreshadowing of the Last Judgment. Here Christ is seen in His majesty, not in His suffering on the cross. The section beginning "Do-best," following on this scene, contains a long discussion on Christ the King. In the apocalyptic vision, it is the triumphant, ruling Christ who is to conquer. Then Langland goes on to picture the coming of Antichrist to whom he felt his own time and society had given allegiance.

Just as Satan and his minions were overcome in the Harrowing of Hell, so finally will Antichrist and all his hosts be subdued—when Conscience finds Piers Plowman and when the religious orders will be able to take over their fundamental task of transforming the world. The Antichrist scene which ends the poem on a realistic note is the anti-vision to the vision of the Harrowing of Hell—the present reality as opposed to God's reality. The concluding vision of "Do-bet," however, foretells the true end to the Antichrist vision of "Do-best." The very presence of Antichrist is, to thinkers

like Langland, actually evidence for the imminence of renewal and fundamentally a hopeful sign.

*Piers Plowman* is thus deeply immersed in the apocalyptic vision of the world and its history. The ideal Pope or spiritual leader is seen in Piers, who is a multi-dimensional symbol, and the saviour-emperor or ideal king appears in *propria persona* in several of the more notable apocalyptic passages. These two figures of late medieval apocalypticism—the angelic pope and ideal king—are united in the figure of Christ in His majesty Who harrows Hell and Whose power and dignity are carefully described in “Do-best.” “Do-best” concentrates on Jesus as Conqueror, King, and Judge. Individual perfection becomes in the last analysis a problem of social perfection, and social perfection to a convinced Christian means the Kingdom of God.

*Piers Plowman* begins with a vision of society, a fair field full of folk, and ends with a similar vision but with the forces of Antichrist unleashed against the true church and the society of the elect, *Unitas*. In between we witness first the problems of society and of the proper distribution of earthly goods, the desire for salvation which is frustrated, and finally the journey of the self towards enlightenment in perfection which leads inevitably back to society. But the only answer is the help of God and His inscrutable will which ordains in this time of *Heilgeschichte* that sufferings be undergone, so that the just and the merciful may finally come into their own and a great social renewal may take place on the road to the Kingdom of God.

The greatest difficulty in seeing the basic apocalyptic quality in *Piers* is the strong and violent criticism of the friars which runs through the whole poem. This satire reaches its culmination at the very end of the poem when Conscience sets out to find Piers Plowman or Christ for two reasons—to destroy pride and to provide a minimum sustenance for the friars. The solution to the whole problem of the world for Langland turned to a great extent on the reform of the friars. How can we relate this violent attack on the friars and the conviction of the centrality of their role in the attainment



of perfection with the apocalyptic frame of mind which informs the whole poem? If friars are merely one group in society among many, it is difficult to see why Langland should consider their reform the crucial problem for the solution of the problem of the world.

The answer to this question is complex. The greatest source of evil in his time, Langland thought, lay in the violation of their natural roles by all groups in society. Of these, the religious are the highest class in society, and their betrayal is the worst just because so much is demanded of them. The wickedness of the clergy is the classic case of all wickedness and the true symbol of the current debasement of society. Within the religious, the monks, or friars, represent the highest group. Monasticism is the quest *par excellence* for Christian perfection. Monasticism in its ideal form is the foreshadowing of the Kingdom of God. Monasticism is the eschatological element in history. These views are commonplaces of the monastic point of view. I believe that Langland was profoundly influenced by this point of view and that he felt the activities of the friars were the most blatant violation of the monastic ideal possible. In this, he was no doubt partly influenced by the quarrels between the monks and friars in his own time, but fundamentally he was sincerely concerned with the violation of trust involved.

Langland's attitude towards the friars was ambiguous. He honored them as types of monks, but he despised them for betraying their ideals. Of all classes of society, their betrayal was the worst just because they, of all groups, had the most to offer society as the exemplars of the Kingdom of God. They were most debased because they should be most elevated. Their debasement, Langland thought, was founded primarily on their view of the nature of poverty which they equated with mendicancy. The recognition of legitimate need on the part of the friars is the first step in the reform of the friars. If they abandon their erroneous concept of poverty and realize that the quest for perfection requires a minimum of food and clothing which can be obtained by legitimate labor, they can then give up their concern for wealth with

the inevitable corruption which attends upon it and truly become, as their status on the highest level as religious demands, genuine seekers for perfection. They would then presumably set an example for all other estates and lead the way to a regeneration of society. If they could be reformed, then all society could be reformed. They are crucial to the salvation of Christendom. We may then, in some sense, all become monks, as Joachim of Flora, a medieval thinker of the twelfth century, had predicted.

### III

In discussing literature, it is not enough to be concerned with what it says; we must also be concerned with how it is said. The how must also be related to and reinforce the what. Literary form is what makes literature in the last analysis literature; otherwise, there is no fundamental difference between a series of notes or a loose discourse on a subject and literary endeavor. Form makes matter memorable; it lifts what is being said to the heights of art.

Now in dealing with older literature in especial, we must endeavor to find out what tradition the writer was working in. In the Middle Ages, the writer was considered a craftsman who knew his business and not merely someone inspired by his own psyche, although there were medieval theories of inspiration, especially connected with the role of the prophet. No doubt Langland and Dante worked under what we would call inspiration, but this did not mean that they could neglect the traditions of their craft.

Among the literary traditions available to these writers and others was the concept of genre. A literary work was thought to belong properly to a genre, an overall literary form, which controlled in general the aims and organization of the attempted work of art. There were other traditions too of style and figurative language, but we shall not concern ourselves with them here. If we can identify the genre or genres which dominated Langland's work, we may get valuable clues as to his intentions and understand better his artistic goals.

Let us now turn to the form of *Piers*. Is there such a genre as an apocalypse? Is *Piers* not only apocalyptic in content but also in form? Here we run into difficulties. What was the literary tradition in which Langland conceived his vast poem? I think part of the difficulty with the work lies in its confusion of genre. *Piers* is a combination of several genres, and in fact there is even a certain clash between them. The restlessness of Will's search for perfection is reflected in his author's uncertain sense of genre.

This is not the place to enter into a discussion of the importance of genre as one of the literary boundaries for the artist. Some have denied its validity in assessing and understanding art, but without committing myself on other periods, I think it is perfectly obvious that the medieval writer was very conscious of the kind of form in which he chose to present his artistic vision and that it is against the customary lines of this form that we can best understand his innovations and his uniqueness. And with a certain form went certain expectations which the writer felt he must at least satisfy.

It is also true that genre analysis is not free of difficulties, great difficulties, especially of definition. What is one man's genre may be another man's theme or motif. Genres also overlap. I think, however, one must only accept as genres, literary forms defined as such before the time of the composition of the work being considered, for some forms are esoteric and others are so broad that they lose the distinguishing marks of a genre—a literary type which has a certain general organization and arouses certain definite expectations in its readers or listeners.

This problem of definition comes to the fore in connection with the quest around which *Piers Plowman* is mainly organized. The literary quest has been a most popular unifying principle in literature in all ages, but in the later Middle Ages it reached its zenith. But it seems to me that it is a theme or dominant image rather than a genre. If then *Piers Plowman* cannot be classified as a quest in regard to genre, what form is it cast in? One of the possible answers is that it is an apocalypse.

Is the apocalypse a literary genre? There are conflicting answers to this question. It is now recognized how indebted Jewish and Christian writings of the period just before, during, and after the life of Jesus are to Greek literary forms and rhetoric. In particular, the influence of the genre called the aretalogy and of the eulogistic biography on the New Testament and early Christian writings such as the *Shepherd of Hermas* have been recognized.<sup>2</sup> The aretalogy is similar in many ways to some of the early apocalypses. Aretalogies were connected with Hellenistic mystery religions and developed alongside the Greek novel. They are narrations of the theophany of a god among men with emphasis on his miracles.<sup>3</sup> No doubt the Semitic prophetic vision is another element in the apocalyptic form. The Books of Daniel and Second Esdras provided models here for *Revelations* and early Christian apocalypses. The characteristics of the early apocalypses include a vision form and direct revelations by God or angels. Yet I agree with Father Musurillo when he writes: "The form known as 'apocalypse' creates a problem, and perhaps no useful purpose is served in making the term a technical one applicable both to the Revelations of St. John and the so-called *Shepherd of Hermas*."<sup>4</sup>

The confusion implicit in the use of the term is seen in the fact that Klingner calls Boethius' *De consolazione*, the great philosophical work of late antiquity, an apocalypse like *Poimandres* and the *Shepherd of Hermas*, earlier works of an apocalyptic cast, while Northrop Frye sees it as a Menippean

<sup>2</sup> On the aretalogy, see R. Reitzenstein, *Wundererzählungen* (Leipzig, 1906), espec. pp. 7 ff; Moses Hadas, *Hellenistic Culture, Fusion and Diffusion* (New York, 1959), pp. 170 ff; and Georgius Manteuffel, *De opusculis graecis aegyptio e papyris, ostracis lapidibusque collectis*, *Travaux de la Société des Sciences et des Lettres de Varsovie, Classe 1* (1930) (Warsaw, 1930). On the pagan encomium and biography and their influence on saints' and martyrs' lives, see Herbert A. Musurillo, *The Acts of the Pagan Martyrs, Acta Alexandrinorum* (Oxford, 1954).

<sup>3</sup> I am indebted for this definition to Herbert Musurillo, "History and Symbol: A Study of Form in Early Christian Literature," *Theological Studies* XVIII (1957), 357-86.

<sup>4</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 365. Cf., however, R. L. P. Milburn who writes that "... this type of imaginative novel-writing [stories about the Virgin] not seldom took the specialized form of apocalypse, perhaps the most influential of these compositions, though its fourth-century date makes it a fairly late one, being the *Apocalypse of Paul*," *Early Christian Interpretations of History*, The Bampton Lectures of 1952 (London, 1954), p. 190.

satire or anatomy.<sup>5</sup> It is clear that it can also be called a *consolatio*, that is a work written to console someone on a loss.<sup>6</sup> While there is no rule that a literary work must be written in one genre, and indeed deliberate mixing of genres is characteristic of many medieval literary works, it is true, I think, that one genre must be thought as somehow dominant in a work or the whole point of the genre as a controlling device is lost.

If the apocalypse is not a literary genre, it is true that it possesses certain characteristics, although not unique ones: it is cast in a vision form, it contains a revelation from on high, or at least a superior guide, and it is severely critical of contemporary history. In general it is oriented toward man's and mankind's final destiny and often contains prophecies under enigmatic figures. *Piers Plowman* possesses all of these elements with possibly the exception of a divine or angelic guide, although *Lady Church* does briefly perform that function in Passus I of the *Visio*. Part of the problem of Will is actually to find an authority, and his quest is not only for perfection but for someone who can lead him to perfection, until finally he realizes that only Piers himself can.

There are differences too. The bitter and explicit satire of *Piers* is rarely to be found in the older apocalypses. Perhaps here we have some influence of the parodic medieval apocalypse such as the twelfth century Latin *Apocalypse of Goliath* where Pythagorus serves as a guide to the dreamer and which is a violent attack on religious abuses.<sup>7</sup> This work was

<sup>5</sup> See Fritz Klingner, *De Boethii consolatione philosophiae*, *Philologische Untersuchungen* 27 (Berlin, 1921) pp. 112 ff. and N. Frye, *The Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton, 1957), p. 312.

<sup>6</sup> On the *consolatio* as a literary genre, see Charles Favez, *La consolation latine chrétienne* (Paris, 1937); Michele Coccia, "Le 'consolatio' in Seneca," *Rivista di cultura classica e medievale* I (1959), 148-80; Sister Mary Edmond Fern, *The Latin Consolatio as a Literary Type*, Dissertation . . . of St. Louis University . . . Typewritten MS, 1931; Alfred Gercke, "De consolationibus," *Tirocinium Philologium*, *Sodalium Regis Seminarium Bonnensis* (Berlin, 1883), 28-70; Carolus Buresch, *Consolationum a graecis romanisque scriptarum, historia critica*, *Leipziger Studien zur classischen Philologie* IX (Leipzig, 1887), 3-170; Edouard Boyer, *Les Consolations chez les Grecs et les Romains*, Thèse . . . La Faculté de Théologie Protestante de Montauban . . . 1887 (Montauban, 1887); Constant Martha, "Les consolations dans l'antiquité," *Etudes morales sur l'antiquité*, 2nd ed. (Paris 1905), 135-89.

<sup>7</sup> Ed. Karl Strecker, *Texte zur Kulturgeschichte des Mittelalters* 5 (Rome, 1928). I owe this suggestion to Professor John Conley.

exceedingly popular in England and may have originally been written there.

Rather than set up a genre called the apocalypse which can only be very vaguely established, I prefer to think of *Piers* rather as an amalgam of the allegorical dream narrative as in certain French works; the vertical dialogue, *consolatio*, or debate<sup>8</sup> as in Boethius' *De consolacione*; and the encyclopedic (or Menippean) satire as in Nigel Wireker's *Speculum stultorum*, a twelfth century poem about an ass who is looking for his lost tail and which is a satire on the church. These genres are not mutually exclusive, and genetically some are related. The *consolatio* in its classic medieval form is, for instance, also a dream vision. Even when this is admitted, however, it is still true that in the Middle Ages these forms were distinct in tradition, had a definite organization, and were designed to satisfy certain expectations in an audience.

These three genres are all related in medieval times to the quest for perfection to which Langland was committed artistically and most certainly personally. In order to dramatize his complex theme, with its mixture of quest, debate, and satire, Langland found himself, so to speak, in the midst of three literary genres which were well-established before his time; and from their conventions he attempted to weave together a unified work of art, a work which would reveal his basic perplexities, dramatize, and objectify them. He was perhaps attempting too much and this alliance was not always successful. And beyond all this hovers the apocalyptic urgency which must have been the driving force in his character.

The reform of the friars is to be the main task of his age, as Langland saw. Not scientists working in laboratories, not the proletariat, but monastic ideals as lived by monks and friars were to be his agent for the reform of the world, and their guidance would lead the world into the golden age awaiting it, hid in the womb of time. This was Langland's answer to his quest for perfection.

<sup>8</sup> On the adjective *vertical* here see Stephen Gilman, *The Art of "La Celestina"* (Madison, 1956), pp. 159-60.



In spite of his propensity to ramble, to develop, to divagate, Langland is firm and single-minded in his essential point—in A, B, and C and from beginning to end. The expansions and changes in the different versions do no more than add more material to build up the essence of what he has to say; they all reveal the hard struggle for Christian perfection. The basic answer, though, the answer Langland never doubted is set out in Passus I of the A-text—moderation in self and society, victory over the betrayal of ideals especially by the clergy, the need for love and justice. In these essentials Langland never wavers. *Piers Plowman* is a monument to the struggles of a perplexed but hopeful, sensitive, fourteenth-century Englishman for a solution to the problems of his time and of all time in the attainment of Christian perfection which must, to his apocalyptic mind, be a social solution which would involve the setting up of the Kingdom of God on earth, very much as his master Jesus had Himself promised in the New Testament.

*"It seems to me that I have stood before many a bottomless pit, have looked into many a charnel house, but what is more vivid still, more awe-inspiring, is the remembrance that, whenever in my life I have gazed too long upon Beauty, particularly the beauty of the female, I have always experienced the sensation of fear. Fear, and a touch of horror too. What is the origin of this horror?"* Henry Miller

## PICASSO'S PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST

*Paul M. Laporte*

### I The Portrait of the Artist in Art

BEFORE THE RENAISSANCE, the arts of painting and sculpture were not counted among the Liberal Arts, but were considered as menial occupations. Portraits of artists in Egyptian and Classical Antiquity, and during the Middle Ages, were representations of crafts activities. The making of images was a "mechanical" activity, essentially not different from such occupations as animal husbandry, boat making, or the mourning over the dead.

Already the Italian painters of the fifteenth century had a clear comprehension of the threefold creative relationship between the objects of the "real" world, the focusing eye of the artist, and the terminus of these two: the flat plane which carries the painting. But they did not make use of this knowledge in their paintings. They preferred to construct their perspectives in an abstract, geometric fashion.<sup>1</sup> They also refrained from portraying the reflective activity of the artist in which the three elements of world, artist, and work become symbols of man's creativity. By the same token, the Italian painters were not inclined to conceive of their self-portraits other than as documentations of physiognomy. Despite Vasari's heroic interpretation of the artist as creative genius,

<sup>1</sup> See the writings on perspective by Alberti and Piero della Francesca.

they treated their self-portraits much as they did any other portraits. An exception is Michelangelo's self-portrait in the painting of the *Last Judgment*.<sup>2</sup> Here, the artist portrayed himself in the drooping and suffering features of the flayed skin that St. Bartholomew holds in his left hand. This is possibly the earliest and one of the most moving references to the agonizing predicament of the artist. It is the tragic ancestor of Rembrandt's late, ironic self-portrait with the senile chuckle on the face.

The Northern painters, however, were the first to represent the artist painting in front of his easel, observing his model. In some of their works, the act of creation, understood by the Renaissance as holding up a mirror to "nature," has itself become a subject matter of art. At first, around the middle of the fifteenth century, a religious theme is taken as a pretext. Thus, Roger van der Weyden paints a portrait of the artist (possibly a self-portrait) in the guise of St. Luke, patron saint of the painters, as he is daintily engaged in making a likeness of the Madonna.<sup>3</sup>

By the early sixteenth century the artist's pursuit becomes strictly secular. Albrecht Dürer uses the triad model-picture plane-artist in a number of explanatory wood cuts for his *Art of Measurement*. But in the famous Munich *Self Portrait* he goes a step further. In the strict frontality of the portrait, with the long hair falling in curls over the shoulders and with the Christ-like beard, Dürer alludes to the Creator in the van Eyck's *Ghent Altar*. The artist as a creator is now for the first time a subject of painting. Despite the dignified garb of the well-to-do burgher in which Dürer portrays himself, he is, like Michelangelo, already aware of the agonies of the artist. His drawing of the *Man of Sorrows* of 1522 bears the artist's own features, and so does a drawing which might be a study for a "Christ at the Column."<sup>4</sup> One is reminded of Thomas Mann's *Doctor Faustus* of whose hero, the great composer Adrian Leverkühn, it is said that "... it was

<sup>2</sup> *Five Hundred Self-Portraits*, L. Goldscheider, ed., (Phaidon Press, 1937), pl. 111.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pl. 15.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pl. 66, 67, 68.

this beard—and perhaps a growing tendency he had to carry his head on one side—that gave his countenance something spiritualized and suffering, even Christlike.”<sup>5</sup>

The seventeenth century abounds in self-portraits, and many of these show the artist engaged in the very act of painting, often in the surroundings of his work room and with the model at his side. One of the most spectacular of these seventeenth century self-portraits is the *Maids of Honor* by Velasquez.<sup>6</sup> The artist in this picture seems to have viewed not only himself but also his models through a mirror. The spectator, accordingly, sees in the picture not what the artist saw in the “real world,” but what he saw in the mirror. The only correction from the mirror image which Velasquez allows himself is that, in the painting, he holds his brush in the right, and the palette in the left hand—a position which would have been reversed had he kept strictly to what he saw in the mirror. Not before the second half of the eighteenth century did artists begin to desist from making this little correction of the mirror image. Examples are self-portraits by David, Corot, and Whistler,<sup>7</sup> among many others. If this minor detail means anything, it indicates that, on the whole, the artists up to the eighteenth century wanted to have you look at their self-portraits as if directly looking at nature, without the indirection of the mirror. Since the eighteenth century, however, they did not mind if the spectator realized that the image was taken from a mirror.

Another circumstance seems to indicate that the artists of the seventeenth century, with some exceptions, wanted to eliminate the effect of the mirror. Some self-portraits of this period, notably those by Vermeer and Ostade,<sup>8</sup> show the artists viewed from the back. If, as is to be supposed, the artists painted these portraits from what they saw rather than from imagination, they must have used two mirrors to arrive

<sup>5</sup> Thomas Mann, *Doctor Faustus: The Life of the German Composer Adrian Leverkühn as Told by a Friend*, H. T. Lowe-Porter trans., (New York, 1948), p. 483. Some of the quotations from this book have been slightly adjusted by me.

<sup>6</sup> *Five Hundred Self-Portraits*, pl. 179.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, pl. 358, 391, 420.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pl. 259, 207.

at the view seen in their pictures. It is as if they wanted to get away from the self-consciousness which resulted from their looking at themselves through the mirror, as if they hoped to eliminate the mirror by introducing a second mirror and thus looking at themselves as a third person.

These, then, are the two solutions of the seventeenth century, the two opposite views of the same situation: first, the artist facing the spectator, with his easel turning its back to the spectator, as in Velasquez and in a youthful self-portrait by Rembrandt;<sup>9</sup> and second, the artist facing into the depth of the picture, turning his back on the spectator while the painting in the picture faces him and us, as in Vermeer and Ostade. Assuming that the artist of the last 500 years was essentially engaged in portraying what presented itself to the mirror of his eye, these self-portraits pose a slightly new problem: the artist portrays what presents itself to him in an actual mirror. In this sense the painting acts no longer as a "window into the world." The peculiar and puzzling space situation in these pictures resolves itself only if the spectator puts himself in the place of the mirror.

From the point of view of the spectator, this means that he is no longer given the impression of the picture being a "window into the world." It is as if he were stepping in front of the opaque and reflecting plane of the mirror; but instead of being confronted with his own reflection, he discovers the image of the artist. This induces the spectator to identify himself with the mirror-image of the artist as represented in the painting. The fiction is that the spectator be identified with the artist. It is as if the artist asked the spectator to take his place.

The spectator taking the place of the artist? This is an appeal to the artist in the spectator. The spectator's creative powers are now to be enlisted: he is no longer supposed to look at a mere report on the artist's discoveries in the visual world, but he is asked to participate in the artist's activity

<sup>9</sup> In the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; reproduced in *The Young Rembrandt and His Time*, Catalogue of a Loan Exhibition, Indianapolis, Ind. 1958.

of seeing. The very moment the artist becomes aware of his artistry he must not only assume that the spectator become self-conscious about his spectatorship, but he must also hope that the spectator become an active participant in the communion of art. The artist viewed from the back and gazing into the depth of the picture is one device used for this purpose. Even though back figures have occurred before in the history of art, their effect was always neutralized by other spatial features. In the seventeenth century, for the first time, the back figure becomes dominant and hence assumes a new compulsory quality as far as the spectator is concerned. Rather than looking *at* the picture, the spectator projects himself *into* the picture; he is practically forced to identify himself with the figure of the artist who turns his back to him. A similar effect is achieved in German landscapes of early nineteenth century romanticism, as, for instance, in Kaspar David Friedrich. Here, the figure seen from the back is no longer a self-portrait in the narrow sense of the word, but it has the same effect: the spectator is asked to take his place *in* the picture, to step into the picture, and to view the landscape from the point of view of the back figure in the front plane.

## II The Portrait of the Artist in Literature

If Rembrandt was the artist of the past who painted the greatest number of self-portraits, Picasso is the artist of the twentieth century in whose whole life work the portrait of the artist represents one of the major subjects, repeated over and over again in all the different aspects and phases of his work. But what about the artist in the history of literature?

The following steps can be observed in the development of the novel. In the seventeenth century, we find for the first time a novel written in the first person: Grimmelshausen's *Simplicissimus*. In the eighteenth century, the autobiographical character of the novel is continued, although the writer is as yet not identified with the artist and may be simply a human being facing the vicissitudes of life, as in *Gulliver*. It is only in the nineteenth century, with such novels as Balzac's *The Unknown Masterpiece* and Zola's *L'Oeuvre* that the



artist becomes actually the hero of the literary work. It is characteristic of this stage in the development of the theme that the problem of the artist as hero becomes a problem of failure. This is to a large degree also true in the work of Henry James, a novelist who may have surpassed even Thomas Mann in the abundant use of this new subject.

For the visual arts, it is in Daumier's work that the portrait of the artist appears more frequently than in any other before Picasso. And Daumier is in keeping with the outlook of the nineteenth century by showing the artist as a failure. His slant is the incongruity between the prosaic and often pompous character of the artist and the would-be beauty of his work. The extremely subjective approach of the twentieth century is a logical outgrowth of this idea of failure. The material of the novel is very often no longer the objective world but only its reflection in the consciousness of the writer, as, for instance, in Proust and in certain works by Faulkner.

The common denominator of art and literature in the seventeenth century is that the writer or artist has been moved *on stage*. Another parallel to this development in the seventeenth century comes from most unexpected quarters, namely from philosophy, and more specifically from Descartes and Pascal. Some of the most important works of these philosophers are written in the first person, an almost shocking proclamation of subjectivity in the field of philosophy. Descartes, like the painter in Vermeer's self-portrait, turns his back to the external world and proclaims to have found the basis for his metaphysics in the consciousness of his self. His own consciousness must have stepped out to contemplate itself from a distance, an accomplishment that the painter could achieve only by the use of two mirrors.

In the twentieth century, a characteristic dichotomy of the West is brought to a climax: that of the classic and the romantic tradition. The first maintains at least an appearance of external reality while the second is to an increasing degree concerned only with internal reality. The classic mode can still express itself *about* the artist while in the romantic mode

the image is the artist. More cautiously expressed: the classic mode can still bring the artist on stage, even if it can do so only in a parodistic or satirical way; while in the romantic mode the stage itself has disappeared and the image has become a reflection of that moment in the artist's mind where the unconscious emerges in consciousness.

The extreme example of the subjective, romantic mode in literature is James Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake*; in painting, the early Kandinsky, Paul Klee, and the self-confessions of the unconscious in Action Painting. As to the objective, classical mode, it is best represented by the work of those two twentieth-century artists who were most consistently preoccupied with the subject of the artist, namely, Thomas Mann and Pablo Picasso.

If subjectivity is a common denominator of twentieth-century art, one may rightly ask the question how the objectivity of the classical mode is still possible in our time. The answer is that a valid use of the classical mode is possible only as parody or "quotation." "Stylistically," says Thomas Mann, "I no longer know anything but parody. In this close to Joyce . . ." <sup>10</sup> And: "How necessary were mask and play in the face of the seriousness of my task . . ." <sup>11</sup> Classical "quotation" appears in Mann's *Doctor Faustus* on two levels. Several sections of the book, and particularly those dealing with the meeting between the hero, the composer Adrian Leverkühn, and the devil, are written in an antiquated language close to Luther's translation of the Bible. It is strange that this parody can serve, at the same time, to make the encounter more believable. But the hero of the novel, even more than the novel itself, is given to quotation in his musical compositions. It is not at least the profuseness with which he utilizes non-traditional material, or rather traditional material from beyond the so-called civilized tradition of the West, which draws the paradoxical criticism of "bloody barbarism" and "bloodless intellectualism" upon Leverkühn's work.

<sup>10</sup> Thomas Mann, *Die Entstehung des Doktor Faustus, Roman eines Romans* (Amsterdam, 1949), p. 51. The translations from this small book are my own.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37.

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The story of the hero Adrian Leverkühn is fashioned according to the lives of such nineteenth century creators as Hoelderlin, van Gogh, the composer Hugo Wolf, and especially Friedrich Nietzsche. It is the motif of the relation between genius and insanity, creativity and sickness, and of the dissolving of inhibitions necessary for the great artistic "break-through." To Thomas Mann, the monstrosity of insanity and the monstrosity of the devil are the same. They are symbols of that monstrous obsession which is a necessary aspect of the creative genius. The devil is a monster in that he combines in himself human and animal characteristics, a living thing "departing greatly in form or structure from the usual type of the species," as Webster has it. In Egypt, such composites of human and animal form were gods; in Greece they were demons, representatives of the spirit and power of nature, like the satyrs and centaurs. In his visual form, the Christian devil is the heir of the pagan satyr. Of both the satyr and the devil it can be said that they are not quite human and yet equipped with powers more than human. The climax of Mann's *Doctor Faustus* is the artist-hero's encounter with the devil who is parodistically projected into the external world. But the hero's whole life is one continued encounter with sickness and insanity which are insoluble ingredients of his creativity.

### III Picasso's Portrait of the Artist

Almost incessantly throughout his long career, from his nostalgic *Acrobats* of the Rose period to his numerous variations on Velasquez's *Maids of Honor* of 1957, Picasso has been engaged in exploring the artist as a subject of representation. Already in the early years of the century Picasso detached himself in a peculiar way from those works of his predecessors which formed his point of departure. Toulouse and Seurat represented the circus, even if highly stylized by artistry, in an epic fashion, as a dazzling slice of the external world. Picasso tends to eliminate the environment; more often than not, he represents his artists and acrobats off stage rather than on stage. In drawing attention to the performer rather

than the performance, in suggesting a certain "unreality" of the scene, and, at the same time, making the figure of the artist the most important part of the image, Picasso equips his artists with both a lyrical and symbolic quality.

In the form of the acrobat, the clown, the harlequin, etc., the artist appears in a masque in which he still can be seen today, for such masques are still part of our lore. This is also the form in which he appears first in Picasso's work, up to the climax of the two large variations of the *Three Musicians*, of 1921. With few and, as I believe, relatively insignificant exceptions, the artist no longer appears in Picasso's large scale oil painting after this period, until he makes his reappearance in the large format of the variations upon Velasquez in the late 'fifties.

But Picasso's continued preoccupation with the subject of the artist is demonstrated by the great number of works dealing with this topic even after 1921. Only, and this is highly significant, the medium was changed from oil to the graphic media of drawing, etching, and lithography. The reduction to black and white, and to a minor scale, was more than offset by the overwhelming number of pieces dealing with this subject. The largest number of these works was executed in two distinct periods of high activity. The earlier group dates from ca. 1925 to 1935; at the present counting, it consists of about 90 pieces. The interest centered around both the illustrations to Balzac's *Unknown Masterpiece*, published in 1931, and a series on *The Sculptor in his Studio*, of 1933. The second group was executed in the very short time between the end of 1953 and early 1954; it consists of some 180 drawings, 70 of which deal with the problem of the artist in one form or another.

Quite a few pieces of this latter group are closely related to the acrobats of the first decade of the century in subject as well as in style. Otherwise, the two groups, that of 1930 and that of 1950, differ in style not only from the major work in oil going on at the same time, but also from each other. The earlier group is closely linked to Picasso's so-called classical style. The work is done in fine, continuous, even lines

with little if any shading, changes, or corrections. The source of inspiration is Classical Antiquity, especially the Attic white-ground *lekythoi* of the second half of the fifth century B.C., and the engraved mirror backings of Etruscan origin, of the third century B.C. Many pieces of the 1950 group are quite different in style. The lines are often discontinuous, tentative, vibrant, and spontaneous; washes, dry-brush markings, and heavy black traces of the brush contribute to these configurations. It is hard to say whether the particular style of this group owes more to inspiration from some Chinese and Japanese drawings, or from drawings by Rembrandt. For, in Asiatic art, even the spontaneous is impersonal, while both Rembrandt and Picasso are highly personal in the manipulation of materials. The problem of "quotation" as a device in twentieth-century literature has been mentioned before. Picasso's so-called classical style is an outstanding example of quotation in the visual arts. In the 1930 group, quotation can be found on the level of both subject matter and style. The artist is often represented as a nude, in detached, dreamlike meditation rather than being involved in the activity of his work. His countenance as well as his features allude to the Greek god Jove. In short, an ideal rather than a real situation is depicted; the reference of this ideal situation to classical antiquity is as unquestionable as is that of the style of these drawings.

Needless to say, these quotations are by no means literal. The admirable artistry, a part of the enjoyment which we may get from these works, lies with the perfect blending of the "quoted" material with the personal and contemporary approach of the artist. More specifically, the figures are often not viewed from one point as they are in Classical Antiquity; they are frequently very clever and convincing composites of several views, a form of seeing first developed by Cubism. Furthermore, the figures are entwined in such a fashion that they form a continuous pattern, a mode of composition quite foreign to Classical Antiquity. Doubtless, Picasso is joking here, but it is not in irresponsible banter. In this case, serious meaning seriously expressed would make the

work pompous and banal. The parodistic quotation is put on like a mask. The mask may be greeted with laughter; but this laughter may turn into an understanding and even a sad smile when we become aware of the deeper truth hidden behind it.

In the 1950 group, the subject is not as frequently transposed into the ideal world of Classical Antiquity as was the case in the earlier group. The artist, sometimes a ragged character, is frequently represented in a more or less contemporary setting. But the situation is comical and, in the incongruence between the laboring artist and the seductive antics of the model, not too different from the way it appears in Daumier. If there is any quotation concerning the subject, it lies in the deceptively simple and traditional juxtaposition of the figures in the composition. Artist, picture and easel, and model are lined up side by side in a way similar to that of Dürer's woodcuts. But there the similarity ends. In Picasso, the canvas on which the artist is painting is not seen in perspective as in Dürer; it is viewed from the side so that it forms a stunning vertical element, almost cutting the composition in two. The plane on which the artist performs his task, far from being a link between him and the outside world, as was the case in the past, has now become a barrier. The very task of reflection, which is symbolized by the canvas, seems forever to separate the artist from the beauty or truth which he seeks in the outside world.

#### IV The End of the Monster

A key for this peculiar situation, symbolic of the predicament of the twentieth century artist, lies in a pencil drawing by Picasso dated December 6, 1937, entitled *The End of the Monster*.<sup>12</sup> On the left side of the page, emerging from the water, appears the torso of a nude young woman. With a wreath on her head, in profile, she is turned to the right of the picture; one arm is stretched out toward the right, holding a mirror which appears as a strong vertical element slightly to the right of center. As if fascinated by and yet

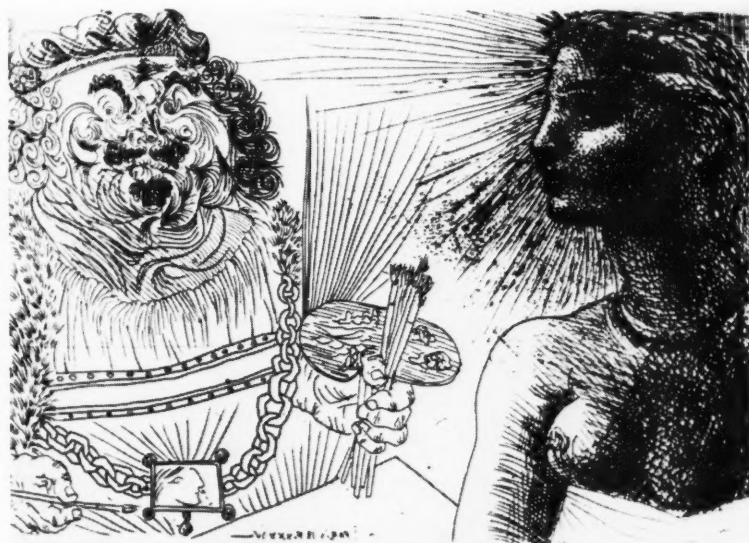
<sup>12</sup> A. H. Barr, Jr., *Picasso, Fifty Years of his Art* (New York, 1946), p. 211.





Picasso, *The End of the Monster*, drawing, 1937

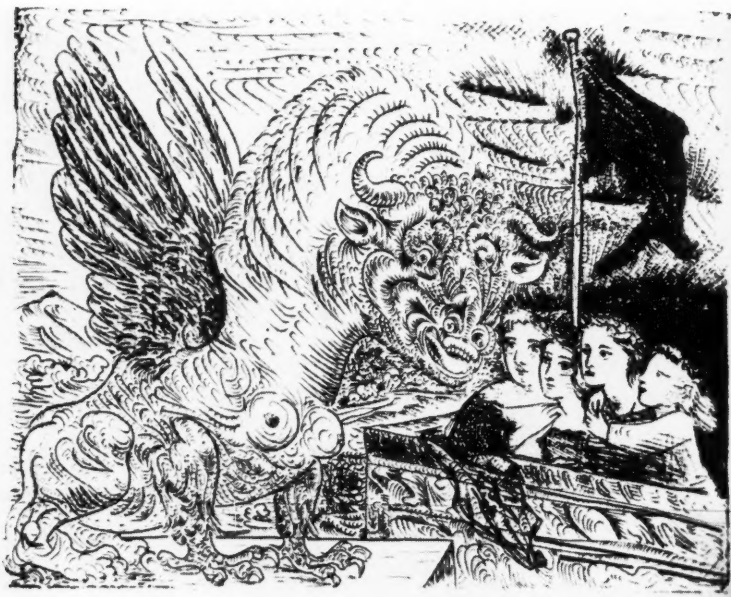
(courtesy Roland Penrose)



Picasso, *Rembrandt with Model*, etching, 1934

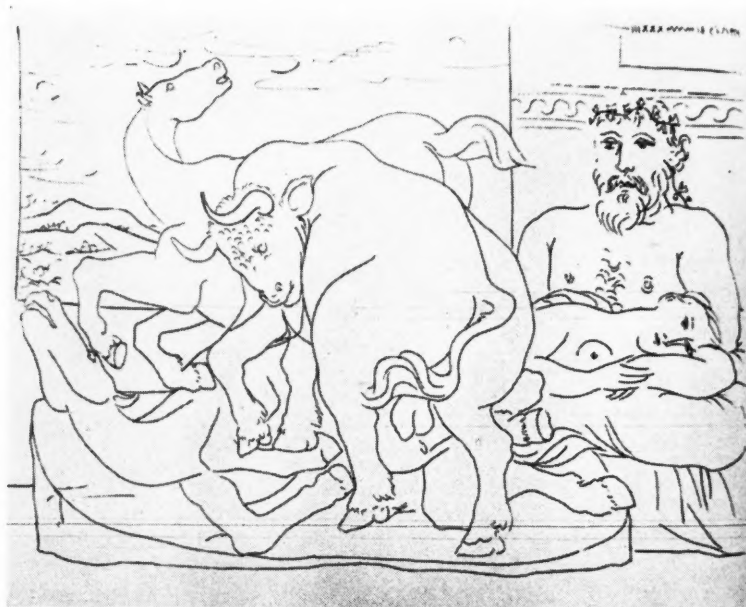
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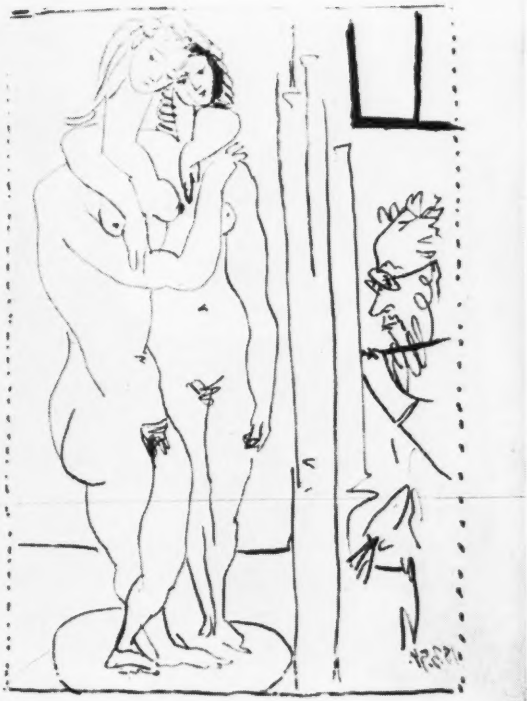
Picasso, *Monster and Four Children*, etching, about 1933

(courtesy SPADEM, Paris)



Picasso, *The Sculptor's Studio*, etching, 1933

(courtesy SPADEM, Paris)



Picasso, *Painter and Two Models*, etching, 1951

(courtesy SPADEM, Paris)



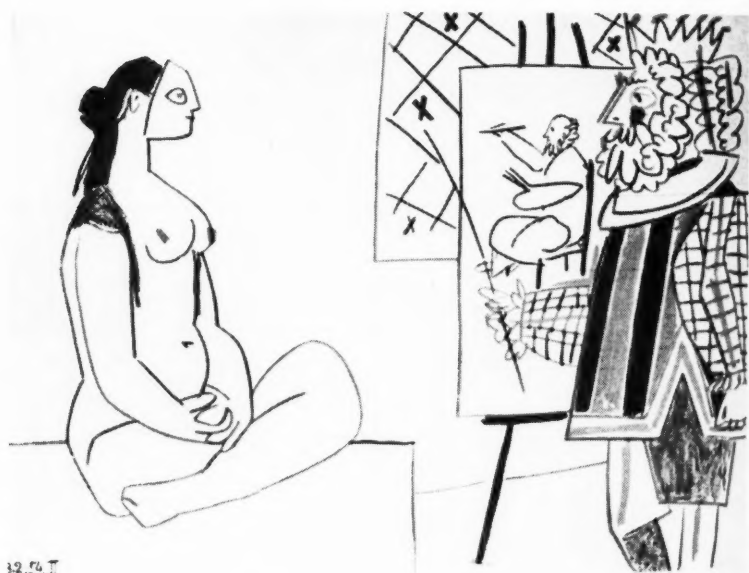
Picasso, *Monkey as Painter*, drawing, 1954

(courtesy VERVE, Paris)



Picasso, *The Masks*, drawing, 1951

(courtesy VERVE, Paris)



Picasso, *Painter and King of Cards*, color drawing, 1951

(courtesy VERVE, Paris)

shrinking away from the mirror, a male figure appears with one leg reaching into the left corner of the page, while he falls back on his hands to the right; he stares into the mirror, openmouthed. The little tail of the figure and its wooly head of a bull crowned with horns characterize it as a monster. An arrow has penetrated his chest from the side of the female figure, the point of the arrow coming out on his back.

The style of this drawing, with its continuous classical outlines, is for the most part that of the 1930 group. The woman is more conservative in treatment than the male figure with its cubist juxtaposition of several aspects of the body. The treatment of the head of the male figure is still more unconventional. The wooly hair and unshaven face give a texture to this area absent from the rest of the page. The head as a whole is viewed in profile; but it has two eyes, both of which are also in profile; the smaller eye is turned away from the mirror while the larger one, widely opened, seems to be looking into the mirror. Nose, mouth, and chin are also differentiated by the different points from which they are viewed.

The *End of the Monster* must be understood in the context of the metamorphic character of Picasso's work which reveals itself quite intimately in Clouzot's motion picture *The Mystery of Picasso*. The surface on which Picasso is shown working in this film is of a material which allows it to be photographed from the back. The material shows all the marks and changes which the artist is in the process of applying to it even though the artist is not seen; it seems as if the painting were painting itself. Through the photographic time-lapse technique the spectator can observe, within a matter of minutes, the proceedings of work which in actuality would have taken hours. The effect is surprisingly similar to that of the animated cartoon. As Picasso tries out different positions of a figure or a head, they seem to be moving, even dancing.

André Verdet describes the metamorphic activities of Picasso during the making of the film in this way: "Successive metamorphoses: a flower is born. It becomes a fish which turns into the image of a siren. The siren transforms itself

into a rooster. The end? A diabolic satyr which the artist begins to color."<sup>13</sup> As Picasso says: "In the old days . . . a picture used to be a sum of additions. In my case a picture is a sum of destructions. I do a picture—then I destroy it. In the end, though, nothing is lost. . . ."<sup>14</sup>

If we were to put together all the portraits of the artist by Picasso and arrange them in a certain order, we could get something like an animated cartoon running through all the stages, meanings, aspects, and moods of the artist;<sup>15</sup> from Olympic detachment to dreamlike contemplation, through intense involvement and demonic frenzy to diabolic obsession and finally back to Dionysian liberation and Jovial benevolence. We start with an image of the artist in the majesty of Jove. He may be accompanied by a female nude, his muse, or by a male youth. Or he may himself turn into a youth, occasionally even into a female figure. Then, when we encounter a king, as for instance King David, or a kingly figure on horseback, or one that resembles a King of Cards, already close to the jester, clown, or acrobat, we still recognize the allusion to the artist. But Jove, and this is historical mythology, can easily turn into a minotaur, that is, a human figure with a bull's head, or even into the bull itself.

The bull's features and attitudes, just as those of the artist, play through the whole range of possibilities in Picasso's work: from the benevolent and Jovial through Olympic detachment to blind suffering or pure agony, to raving assault, whether in terms of the bullfight or of sexual attack. In the latter form, the circle is closed because the subject of sexual attack is treated both with the minotaur and with an athletic, Jove-like figure as the male element. In short, the principle of creation is represented through all these metamorphoses, from its brute animal form to its ideal Olympic form.

<sup>13</sup> André Verdet, *Picasso à son image* (Nice, 1956).

<sup>14</sup> Picasso, *Forty Nine Lithographs* (New York, 1947), frontleaf.

<sup>15</sup> See Picasso's statement as quoted in Juan Larrea, *Guernica* (New York, 1947), p. 13: "It would be highly interesting to fix photographically, not the successive stages of a painting, but its successive changes. In this way one might perhaps understand the mental process leading to the embodiment of the artist's dream."



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These metamorphoses of the principle of creation alone would supply sufficient evidence for the identification of the monster with the artist. But why should the artist be symbolized by a monster? The visual pun in *The End of the Monster* could be verbally paraphrased in the following fashion. The artist pursues Beauty and Truth. The function of the mirror in the hand of the young beauty is one of the characteristic inversions of a traditional subject at the hands of Picasso, inversions which make for the fertile variety as well as the psychological depth of the artist's metamorphoses. The mirror is a traditional attribute of Beauty. It can be transformed from a symbol of narcissistic love into one of truth. An instance of the truth-speaking mirror is the one questioned by Snow-White's mother. But, to my knowledge, the mirror was never, before Picasso, used for anything but self-reflection. Picasso reverses the function of the mirror, turning it into a weapon held up by Beauty against the assault of the Monster. Compositionally, too, the mirror is significant: it forms a strong vertical element in the center of a page which is largely composed of horizontals and diagonals. The division it creates between Beauty-Truth and the Artist-Monster is akin to the division created by the canvas between the artist and the model in the 1950 group of the portrait of the artist.

In *The End of the Monster*, the artist has pursued Beauty, but he has found Truth instead, truth in the mirror. And now it turns out that he cannot endure the truth which stares at him from the mirror in the form of his own distorted features. Deadly wounded by this confrontation, the Artist-Monster collapses, "a marked man, pierced by the arrow of fate." "Love and poison," says Thomas Mann, "here once and forever become a frightful unity of experience; the mythological unity embodied in the arrow."<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> *Doctor Faustus*, pp. 153-154.—Thomas Wolfe's hero in *You Can't Go Home Again* (Grosset & Dunlap, New York, n.d.) is the perfect American version of the artist as the monster. "Have I really acted according to some inner truth . . ." asks the writer George Webber, "or did my unhappy mother conceive and give birth to a perverse monster who has defiled . . . the human race?" This passage was probably written in the very same year in which Picasso created the *Monster*.

The monstrosity of the male figure in this drawing appears on several levels. First, in the subject itself, because he is a composite of human and animal elements. Second, on the stylistic level: the composition of the features of the Monster appears almost like a quotation from those Picasso heads which, by those who mistakenly take them as literal truth, have been called "monstrosities" for their cubistic and expressionistic character. Finally, there seems to be something of a stylistic break between the head of the Monster and the rest of the picture. Such breaks in stylistic consistency, which are a serious challenge to one of the oldest "laws" of artistic creation, are not rare in the work of Picasso. One might consider them as the licentious manifestation of the primacy of expression over art. But they may also be interpreted, more fundamentally, as the consequence of a tendency which both tacitly and expressedly pervades a large part of twentieth century art, the tendency which considers art more as an emergence or "break-through" of the deeper levels of unconscious experience than as the creation of finished products. Moreover, the juxtaposition of the cubistic head of the Monster with the "classical" idiom of the rest of the drawing has also an ironic connotation. It is a kind of self-persiflage that the artist, for the first time now confronted by his own mirror-image, is killed by the very monstrosity which he has created.

It has been said about Picasso that his working is a way of life. "For him," his old friend Sabartes wrote, "the result obtained or to be obtained counts less than the effort made to obtain it." This is simply another way of saying that Picasso's work is radically spontaneous. But, just as in music, consummate spontaneity and rigid pre-determination appear in a paradox union. It always puzzled me how Picasso's spontaneity could be reconciled with his insistence on wearing a wrist-watch. But insistence on chronology is also expressed by Picasso's long-time habit of conscientiously writing the date on each product coming from his hand. Each object is, as it were, a spontaneous eruption. Yet part of its meaning would be lost if it were not understood in and through the place it has in a sequence. "The work of art!" exclaims

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Thomas Mann through the mouth of Leverkühn, "It is a fraud. It is something the burgher wishes there still were. It is contrary to truth, contrary to seriousness. Genuine and serious is only the very short, the highly consistent . . . moment."<sup>17</sup>

As against this interest in the spontaneous which is typical of the twentieth century, the traditional artist was still more of an artificer or artisan, bent on making a finished object even if as much driven by his demon as a Michelangelo or a Rembrandt. Picasso, like Thomas Mann, is aware of the conflict between the emptiness of traditional "beauty" and the all but vicious vitality of the actual. The German writer puts his probing finger on the wound, thus: "The question is whether at the present stage of our consciousness, our knowledge, our sense of truth, this little game (of art) is still permissible, still intellectually possible, still to be taken seriously; whether the work as such, the construction, self-sufficing, harmonically complete in itself, still stands in a legitimate relation to the complete insecurity, problematic conditions, and lack of harmony of our social situation; whether all seeming, even the most beautiful, even precisely the beautiful, has not today become a lie."<sup>18</sup>

Even if it has some nineteenth-century overtones, Oscar Wilde's essay *The Decay of Lying*, faces up to the same contingency. "If something cannot be done," he says, "to check, or at least modify our monstrous workshop of facts, Art will become sterile, and beauty will pass away from the land."<sup>19</sup> And Thomas Mann continues this pervading lament on art, thus: "Pretence and play have the conscience of art against them today. Art would like to stop being pretence and play, it would like to become knowledge.—But what ceases to conform to its definition, does that not cease to exist altogether? . . . But these later criticisms, levelled against pretence and play, in other words against form itself, seemed to indicate such an extension of the kingdom of the banal, of the no

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 181.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 180.

<sup>19</sup> Oscar Wilde, *The Decay of Lying* (Girard, Kansas, n.d.), p. 12.

longer permissible, that it threatened to swallow up art itself. With deep concern I asked myself what strain and effort, intellectual tricks, byways, and ironies would be necessary to save it, to reconquer it, and to arrive at a work which as a travesty of innocence confessed to the state of knowledge from which it would be won!"<sup>20</sup>

Thomas Mann's *Doctor Faustus*, as evidenced here, touches all the wounds, touches the wound of contemporary art. Beauty and archetypal truths can be treated only indirectly, only by parody and irony, in short by quotation. But in order to achieve the great "break-through," the help of the monster, of the devil has to be enlisted; a superhuman effort needs the aid of subhuman powers. Destruction, seemingly so foreign to the art of the past, is a necessary aspect of the art of the twentieth century. "What counts," writes Rimbaud as early as 1871, "is to make the soul monstrous."<sup>21</sup> And e.e. cummings expresses the same urgency:

a fiend, if fiends speak truth . . .  
coward, clown, traitor, idiot, dreamer, beast—  
such was a poet and shall be and is.<sup>22</sup>

Nor must this be taken literally; this is more than literal truth, it is symbolic. However much of an "evil-doer" Prometheus may have been from the point of view of the then prevailing cosmic order, he was also a benefactor of man. He pays the price for his *hybris*, but his achievement cannot be made undone. The monstrosity of contemporary art lies with the *hybris* of the age, its "ugliness" is not intrinsic, it is but a reflection of the viewer's fear of the unknown.

## V Inversions and Transformations

Our hypothetical motion picture of the artist in Picasso's work, passing through the phase of the *End of the Monster*, has revealed a moment of acute crisis; but while we are still under the impression of this catastrophe, the artist's features

<sup>20</sup> *Doctor Faustus*, p. 181.

<sup>21</sup> Quoted in Jacques Maritain, *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry* (New York, 1953), p. 185.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 274.

have already changed into something else. From the deadly wounded Monster they transformed themselves into the overpowering monstrosity of a sphinx, minotaur, and chimaera, all thrown in one, as in the important etching of 1933.<sup>23</sup> Only a short time before, in 1931, André Gide had written in *Oedipus*: "You must understand . . . that there is only one answer to those many and various questions (of the sphinx); and that this answer is: Man; and that this one man, for each and all of us, is: Oneself."<sup>24</sup>

But now it is 1934, and the Monster has once more changed his appearance. Is it Rembrandt, is it van Gogh? The conspicuous textural quality of the Monster's head in the 1937 drawing has already been mentioned. The same stylistic device is used for the main personages in some pages of 1933 and 1934. This device is doubtlessly a quotation from the obsessive character of van Gogh's short curly brushstrokes. In what I would like to call the Artist as Rembrandt, the artist is represented with a brush in his right and a palette and more brushes in his left hand.<sup>25</sup> Placed on the left side of the page, he wears the typical beret and gown of Rembrandt. His mustache and goatee give him a mephistophelic appearance in spite of the massive fleshiness of his features. His long, curly hair fuses with the fur over his shoulders which in turn continues into a heavy gold chain with an amulette in the middle. Is this amulette a mirror or an engraved plaque? Either way, it reflects the classical profile of Beauty, who, as the artist's model, is placed on the right side of the page.

Other allusions to, or paraphrases upon, particular artists can be found in Picasso's work. There is, above all, the Velasquez of the 1957 paintings after the *Maids of Honor*.<sup>26</sup> In the very first picture of this series Picasso enlarged the relatively small figure of Velasquez into a giant towering over all the other personages in the composition.

A reference of a different kind is found in a number of

<sup>23</sup> *L'Oeuvre Gravé de Picasso* (Lausanne, 1955), pl. 84. (American Edition by Harry N. Abrams, N. Y.)

<sup>24</sup> André Gide, *Two Legends* (New York, 1958), p. 28.

<sup>25</sup> *L'Oeuvre Gravé*, pl. 28.

<sup>26</sup> Picasso, *Les Menines et la Vie*, Texte de Jaime Sabartes (Paris, 1958), pl. 1.

pages of the 1950 drawings which doubtlessly portray the aged Matisse, a Jovial personage if there ever was one, even when wearing his indispensable spectacles.<sup>27</sup> It is a touching thought that these drawings were made by Picasso less than a year before this patriarch of modern painting was to die. Picasso, once again a neighbor of Matisse, paid repeated visits to the old man who was already confined to his bed at the time. Matisse has brought us back into the realm of Olympic and royal countenance where the artist may appear as a king, even if only as a king of cards, and from here down again to the knight, the jester, the dwarf, and even the monkey—or as the Rembrandtesque King David coveting Bathsheba, in the variations upon a painting by Lucas Cranach.

But the game of variations, transformations, and inversions is inexhaustible. One of the illustrations to Balzac's story *The Unknown Masterpiece*, of 1927, follows the idea of the story to some extent.<sup>28</sup> At left is the knitting model in three-quarter view, clothed, not young, fairly realistic in treatment. To the right, facing the model in profile, is the half-figure of the artist, nude except for his trunks. In the center, facing the spectator, is the canvas, with a labyrinth of abstract scribbles on it. In another version of the same theme, the most realistic and three-dimensional part of the etching is the very portrait on the canvas.

In 1935, the theme is turned into a travesty.<sup>29</sup> The center of the stage is taken up by a three-dimensional, abstract concoction of a surrealist kind, sitting on a chair and designated by two globular forms as a female; in one fin-like arm this monstrous being holds a tablet on which it draws with the other. Beneath the tablet, on the floor, is a slender vase with brushes; on the right side of the page is an easel with a small, empty canvas on it. On the left side is a large mirror turned toward our surrealist female artist who is obviously drawing from it. In the mirror appears, ironically, the classical profile of Beauty, herself in the act of drawing. Again the artist is a

<sup>27</sup> Picasso, *A Suite of 180 Drawings* (New York, n.d.) (from Verve 1954); e.g., the drawings dated Dec. 23, 1953, Jan. 10, and 11, 1954.

<sup>28</sup> Barr, p. 145.

<sup>29</sup> Joan Merli, *Picasso*, 2nd ed. (Buenos Aires, 1948), fig. 432.



monstrosity, and it as if Picasso wanted to say that Reality, which in this case includes the artist, is a monstrosity, and that Beauty exists only through "the seeming and appearance of art," in the reflection of the mirror. Of this, as of so many others of the works under discussion, one could say with Shakespeare's Polonius: "How pregnant sometimes his replies are! a happiness that often madness hits on, which reason and sanity could not so prosperously be delivered of."

Art, then, is not to be mistaken for reality. It is, even now, even in the twentieth century, "pretence and play." Its most common, age-old symbol is the mask. And, actually, in the 1950 series, the theme of the mask appears once more in Picasso's work, and in innumerable variations. In one of the most intriguing pages of this group, artist and model seem to be engaged in a kind of ceremonial dance.<sup>30</sup> They face each other, the artist to the left as an ugly nude dwarf holding up before him, and almost covering himself with, the large mask of—Beauty. The nude model to the right, young and slender, with the wide-rimmed hat of a shepherdess, holds up before her the bearded mask of Jove. Thus the artist covers his misshapen form with the mask of Beauty while Beauty hides behind the mask of the supreme creator, a comic variation upon the tragic parody of the *End of the Monster*.

This exchanging of roles throws light on still another aspect of our topic. In some pages appears the enigmatic figure of what might be called a Shakespearean transvestite, occasionally taking the place of the consort of the artist himself.<sup>31</sup> Is this an allusion to the double character of male-female in the artist? The equation would be as follows. Nature impresses itself upon the artist like the male upon the female. But, in his turn, the artist, in the act of creating his work, assumes the role of the male. Thus, the artist repeats in himself the unending contest between male and female. He needs

<sup>30</sup> 180 *Drawings*, dated Jan. 24, 1954. An exchange of masks of male and female is found already in a painting by Max Beckmann of 1934, coll. Mr. and Mrs. Henri Morgenroth, Santa Barbara, California, publ. in Alfred Neumeier, *Glanz Des Schönen* (Heidelberg, 1959).

<sup>31</sup> *L'Oeuvre Gravé*, pl. 45.

to be a composite, a monster, constantly reeling between being overpowered or in turn overpowering. "This was," says Thomas Mann, "the work which he was mastering, the while it mastered him; for which his powers were slowly gathering head while they lay stretched in torments."<sup>32</sup>

Picasso need not have, and most likely had not, thought overtly about these problems when he appropriated and transformed some of these traditional subjects. But it is strange to notice that, with all his life-long preoccupation with the bull and the bull fight, Picasso has very rarely made use of the supreme moment of the bull fight—the killing of the bull. Quite to the contrary, his obsession is with the suffering and killing of the horse, and even of the matador. This may be an unconscious reversal of the pristine meaning of the bull fight, were it not for the fact that the killing of the bull is but the prelude of his resurrection. The outstanding exception from Picasso's avoidance of representing the supreme moment of the bull fight may be a painting of 1934 where the bull, pierced in his neck by the sword, breaks down in the agony of death.<sup>33</sup> But the matador is not present in this picture which thus talks about the solitary death agony of the bull and not about the victory of the bullfighter. More revealing still is the fact that this bull has been transformed, almost verbatim, into the deadly wounded horse of *Guernica*, painted but a few years later.

*The End of the Monster*, by the way, was created in the same year as *Guernica*, and only a few months after this great masterpiece of the twentieth century. *Guernica* occupies a unique place in Picasso's lifework both in terms of its finished state and its deadly seriousness. Does *The End of the Monster* mean that the artist all but killed himself in the making of *Guernica*? The *Minotauromach* of 1935 should also be mentioned here:<sup>34</sup> this obscure funeral march, with the horse carrying the dead matador, and a female matador at that, and the Minotaur following the strange cavalcade as a strange mourner. An epic rather than a tragic variant of this motive appears already in a page belonging to the sequence of the

<sup>32</sup> *Doctor Faustus*, p. 354.

<sup>33</sup> Barr, p. 187.

<sup>34</sup> *L'Oeuvre Gravé*, pl. 89.

*Sculptor in his Studio*, of 1933.<sup>35</sup> Here, an Olympic creator, with a dreamy-eyed model lying peacefully in his lap, contemplates the apparition of a bull fiercely attacking two horses, one of which is already gored.

In his portrait of the artist Picasso has spoken about Beauty, Truth and—yes—about Morality (the Good). Largely, he quoted from pre-Christian myths, but even the pagans knew that knowledge could be gained only at a price. Picasso quoted ideas as well as styles, and occasionally even his own style. Through the irony, parody, and burlesque of the quotation many ideas could be expressed which would have appeared unbearably trite and commonplace had he tried to express them in a direct way, and seriously. The suspecting amateur who asks whether Picasso is not a great faker, whether he is not working with tongue in cheek, has more truth on his side than he could have anticipated. Translated into a more knowledgeable and moralistic language, the criticism is that of "bloody barbarism" and "bloodless intellectualism" raised against the artist-hero Leverkühn in Thomas Mann's *Doctor Faustus*.

In his small volume on the origin and formation of *Doctor Faustus*, which bears the strange subtitle *Novel of a Novel*, Thomas Mann is very much involved with this problem. Paradoxical and mutually exclusive as these twin accusations seem to be, they do belong together: they are raised from the same point of view, namely that of the *status quo* in art, thus revealing two opposite aspects of the same basic problem. The problem is simply this: is art still possible today? Or, to paraphrase a saying of Thomas Mann's, is there, in the realm of art, still anything of account today but what is no longer art? This is everything but a rhetorical question; it is gnawing away at the artist as the eagle gnawed at Prometheus, because, in order to avoid mass-banalities, art must enter into a pact with the devil. "The poet makes himself a seer," says Rimbaud, "through a long, immense, and reasoned-out dislocation of all the senses. . . . He becomes beyond all others the great Invalid, the great Criminal, the great Accursed One—

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, pl. 60.

and the supreme Knower!" And then Rimbaud adds: "Let him be blasted while leaping among things unheard of and nameless: There will come other horrible labourers; they will begin at the horizons where the others collapsed."<sup>36</sup>

Art must borrow matter and form from man's barbaric past; it must destroy all form if it is to arrive at its own form. It is in this sense that, in his climactic dialogue with the artist-hero Leverkühn, the devil says: "Life is not squeamish . . . it takes hold of the dauntless product of disease, feeds on and digests it, and as soon as it takes it to itself it is health. All distinction between disease and health crumbles before the datum of effectiveness in life."<sup>37</sup> In the very same sense Mephistopheles in Goethe's *Faust* says that he is:

Part of the Power which would  
The Evil ever do, and ever does the Good.

In his willful borrowing of barbaric subjects and forms, Picasso has earned as much of the accusation of "bloody barbarism" and "bloodless intellectualism" as has Mann's hero Leverkühn. But what about the author of this great novel, what about Thomas Mann himself? Comparing himself with James Joyce, Mann thinks that ". . . beside Joyce's eccentric avant gardism my work would appear as feeble traditionalism." Of this, he continues, "that much is true that a traditional attitude, even if colored by parody, produces a greater accessibility and carries the possibility of a certain popularity. *Yet this is more a matter of attitude than of essence.*"<sup>38</sup>

In his general temper, Thomas Mann is more akin to Matisse than to Picasso. Both Mann and Matisse still try to achieve beauty and completeness in their work, while Picasso seems to sacrifice everything to a radical truthfulness. Thomas Mann is still dedicated to the creation of a work, an object which can stand by itself. Hence, he moves at the brink of failure. "Occupied with the novel" [that is *Doctor Faustus*] he says in his diary. "Attempts to find the connection and to revive interest. *Failure . . . can no longer be doubted. Never-*

<sup>36</sup> Quoted in Maritain, p. 185.

<sup>37</sup> *Doctor Faustus*, p. 242.

<sup>38</sup> *Die Entstehung des Doktor Faustus*, p. 83; my italics.

theless, I shall carry it to the end."<sup>39</sup> To this obduracy Picasso opposes his simple "I never do a painting as a work of art."<sup>40</sup> Picasso cannot meet with failure because each statement on a canvas is but a momentary emergence in a lifelong process of creation. The resultant object is not meant to have the same finality as the objects created by Mann or Matisse.

#### VI A Self-Portrait by Picasso

With the twentieth-century search for a truth deeply hidden underneath the appearances of our daily encounters, portraiture as the creation of a likeness, be it of people, of things, or of optical space, has practically disappeared. After his early years, and even though the artist in his many metamorphoses is one of the main themes of his life work, Picasso has never again created any self-portraits. Possibly the only exception is a little vignette from the manuscript of a play, *Desire Caught by the Tail*, written by Picasso in 1943.<sup>41</sup> But even this little caricature does not give us the features of the artist. In fact, the scene is viewed straight from the top so that we see nothing but the globe of the artist's head with a few hairs, the eyeglasses in front, and above a table with the artist's tools. This top view changes the traditional side-by-side arrangement of figures within the receptacle of space. Artist and environment are locked together within the plane of the page. Nor is the artist separated from the world by the canvas on which he reflects the world. Instead, the world, symbolized by the table with the draftman's paraphernalia, is conceived as an extension of the artist. The contemporary artist does not look at, but must deeply penetrate, the world for the transaction of art to be consummated.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 101.

<sup>40</sup> A. Liberman, "Picasso," *Vogue*, Nov. 1, 1960.

<sup>41</sup> Roland Penrose, *Portrait of Picasso* (New York, 1957), fig. 172.

<sup>42</sup> For further reading see the following items which came to my attention only after two talks on the subject had been delivered over Radio KPFF, Los Angeles, in December 1959 and January 1960:

R. P. Blackmur, "The Artist as Hero (a disconsolate chimera)," *Art News*, Sept. 1951, pp. 18 ff.

Erich Heller, *The Ironic German, a Study of Thomas Mann*, Boston-Toronto, 1958.

Michel Leris, "Picasso and the Human Comedy," in *A Suite of 180 Drawings*.

## JULIAN REDIVIVUS

Stebelton H. Nulle

THERE HAVE BEEN THREE different Julians in literary and historical tradition. The first was the young and tragic Flavius Claudius Julianus, "*empereur honnête homme, théologien homme d'esprit*," in Anatole France's tribute, who ruled the Roman Empire for eighteen months in the fourth century and who forsook the Christian faith. This Julian, Neoplatonist philosopher, statesman, and soldier, who (as he said) sought to "imitate the gods by having the fewest possible needs and doing good to the greatest possible number," made a lasting mark upon the mind of Christendom. Not, however, for his moral virtues. It was his apostasy, rather, that shook the Christian world of his day, as once the threat of Cleopatra, the Cleopatra of Horace's "*regina dementes . . . fatale monstrum*," had shaken the earlier Roman world. There was no forgiveness for either.

Out of this fear-begotten hate and violence the second Julian emerged, with the repulsive agnomen, Apóstata. Beginning with the sanctimonious spite of Gregory Nazianzen, he became the blackguard of patristic literature next only to Judas Iscariot: the satanic monster of medieval fable, the foul magician who met his doom in battle through the intervention of the Virgin herself, and who in his dying breath gave the victory to Christ. What fear began, ignorance completed. "Deprived of actual knowledge," as John Addington Symonds says, the Gothic imagination ". . . transformed what it remembered of the classic age into romance: . . . dreams of a half-forgotten past." For a thousand years there was apparently no future for Julian at all, no advocate with posterity. He had become a myth.

But by 1600 he appeared in still another configuration: one of such congeniality to not a few, in the widening circle of those who knew him, that it is possible to speak of him as



*redivivus*, brought to life again. This third Julian was at once the issue and the symptom of a vast culture-transformation; his fortunes were part of a milieu and moment vaguely called the Renaissance; but, insofar as such change may be pinned down to less impersonal agencies, it was because a retired Gascon laird was of a meditative turn and fond of reading. This man was Michel de Montaigne.

## I

The story of Julian's rehabilitation that ends in France begins in Italy. Here, in the prosperous cities, from the age of the Communes, men in search of a life-pattern more consistent with the political and economic realities of their times than the immediate one they had inherited from the Middle Ages, turned with increasing enthusiasm to classical antiquity, imagined by them, in the words of F. Chabod, as ". . . the ideal moment of human history, in which the highest aspirations of mankind were realised."

The moral life and values of this antique world, along with its languages and belles-lettres, became the "New Learning" or humanities: the cicerone to the happy life. Whether this promoted merely a pleasing worldly type of life, concerned with individual and personal values, or a life of more unmixed other-worldliness, nothing inconsistent was seen between Catholicism and the pagan classics. The same mouth could in fact, Gregory the Great to the contrary, "contain both the praises of Jove and the praises of Christ."

The eventual *rifacimento* of Julian might have been augured from the two currents of thought flowing naturally out of this, currents that were to swell strongly in the sixteenth century. The first and earlier was an autonomous lay morality that would one day compete with religious doctrine. The second, and at least partly independent current, was the theory of a natural religion implicit in all conciliations of Christianity with classical antiquity: the view that every religious and philosophic truth is part of a single divine whole, and productive of sound morality.

The effect of the new orientation upon the fortunes of

Julian was not immediately apparent, as was only natural. Monks and schoolmen, in full possession of the field, still lay in wait for him with the patristic and clerical version of the classical past. The manuscript materials that would clear the way for a new Julian remained neglected, unknown to humanists or hidden to the West in Greek until the fifteenth century. Dante ignored him; his place with Capaneus in the Seventh Circle, if not among the arch-traitors in the last circle of Cocytus, is strangely vacant. Perhaps the poet's feeling for imperial lordship restrained him from slandering a Roman emperor; but Petrarch did not hesitate. Benightedly, in his *De Remediis*, he lumps him with the more discredited Roman monarchs as an overweening tyrant, even with Elagabalus, that sexual psychopath, the "pretty boy from Emesa" of Julian's own gibe.

However, the court that was to reverse this ancient verdict was beginning to take shape. The *sederunt* opened at the end of the fourteenth century when the Byzantine Chrysoloras made Florence the centre for the study of Julian's native tongue; and, by the early 1500s, Greek had spread so widely throughout the West that men of humane learning need not, out of ignorance or fear, shrug off passages in their reading with a "*Graeca sunt, ergo non legenda.*" Florence also became the centre of the zealous hunt for Greek and Latin manuscripts among the libraries and archives of religious houses across the Alps and in the Byzantine East. Among the early finds were codices of Julian's mentor, Libanius, and the orations of Julian himself; but above all the unique tenth-century *Codex Fuldensis* of Ammianus Marcellinus, the great fourth-century historian who made Julian his hero. All this was fresh material presented in the court of history.

A mighty impulse was given to Hellenic studies when, early in 1439, the Byzantine emperor John VIII came to Florence to negotiate for the union of the Christian churches in a last desperate throw to save Constantinople from the Turk. To the great joy of Italian humanists, in his train of theologians came the noted visionary Neoplatonist, Georgios Gemisthos. Now, Neoplatonism was the chief source of the

current of Helleno-Christian syncretism among humanists. Many of them, as they turned from the official Aristotle of the schools to Plato, found him not in Augustine or in the Plato of the early Middle Ages but in the third-century version of Plotinus, who once, along with Porphyry and, above all, with Iamblichus, had engrossed the syncretising Julian. It is no wonder, then, that among the orthodox, Gemisthos was the reputed enemy of the Christian faith, like Porphyry his master or even the Apostate himself. Although, as François Masai has lately written in his *Pléthon et le Platonisme de Mistra*, Gemisthos was not the first "Hellene" the Byzantine world had known since the days of Julian, his work "... continued to shore up (*reprendre en sous-oeuvre*) that of the emperor." Did he then wish it were not that spectre of a vanished past, the sad Palaeologus, whom he followed to the Council, but the imperial sage of old, who would again confound the assembled Fathers?

Speculation aside, Florence now became the capital of the New Learning. Cosimo de'Medici ("Il Vecchio"), its master, himself a collector of codices, provided open house for artists and men of letters; and, in 1462, still under the influence of Gemisthos, he founded the famed Academy for the advancement of Hellenic studies. His protégé Marsiglio Ficino, who inherited Gemisthos's mantle and held that men might be led to Christ through Plato, was its director. Seven years later, Cosimo's grandson Lorenzo, called "the Magnificent," succeeded to his power, and presided in his own right as a connoisseur and man of letters over a brilliant gathering of men of taste and learning.

A more well-affected tribunal for Julian's hearing could hardly be imagined, in its first fine careless rapture for the pagan world, than Medicean Florence, where Plato was held divinely inspired and where truth was identified with no one revelation or tradition. After the devout convivium on Plato's legendary birthday, as the night passed with wine and talk, and the ancient world lived again on the hillside at Fiesole, the name of Julian, the ardent Platonist and champion of "Hellenism," was inevitably on the lips of Ficino and his

high-minded company. Is not his manuscript of Julian's *Hymn to King Helios*, with annotations in Ficino's own hand, still to be seen in Florence, a work that contributed something to the new climate of cosmological opinion in the Copernican Age? Is not Julian quoted and paraphrased in Ficino's *Opera* time and again?

Under the spell of antiquity and fortified by new knowledge, the little world of humanism was amply prepared for a fresh approach to Julian; and, in 1489, on the feast of SS. John and Paul (June 26), that step was at last taken. It was literally a dramatic move, in the form of one of the long sacred spectacles so popular in fifteenth-century Italy; but there was even more drama in that the new Julian came from the gifted pen of Lorenzo himself, and, if some authorities may be credited, in that the spectators were treated to the sight of the versatile and charming author taking part in person in his own play. *La Rappresentazione di SS. Giovanni e Paolo* must have been a lavish production, with a numerous cast of characters and throngs of extras for the tableaux, processions, and battle-scenes; and the many episodes were punctuated by interludes of songs and music composed expressly for the occasion.

A good deal of intimacy on the part of the company with the background of the scenes appears to have been presumed; but, inasmuch as they incorporated much of the Julianic myth, there was nothing to perplex a gathering trained to the convention. Already, five centuries earlier, the nun of Gandersheim, Hroswitha, had drawn from the same antique grab-bag, a jumble of Cappadocian hagiography, patristic lore, and Byzantine legends, for her Latin playlet, *Gallicanus*. In fact, it was there that Julian had been cast in his first dramatic role in literature.

Lorenzo's play opens on a familiar medieval note. Costanza, daughter of Costantino, the great Constantine, is healed of leprosy by Sant'Agnese. Gallicano, the pagan general, asks for the princess in marriage; and the emperor, uncertain of his loyalty, hesitates to refuse, although Costanza has embraced a life of virginity in gratitude for her miraculous cure. Gal-

licano, suspecting the imperial intentions, takes the holy brothers John and Paul as pledges on an expedition against the Dacians; but when the prayers of the two saints snatch a Roman victory from defeat, he receives the faith and professes the monastic life. Next, Constantine resigns the empire in favor of his son, who is presently deposed. Julian, the nephew of Constantine, then assumes the purple, whereupon the persecution of Christians begins. After some caustic challenges from Julian to give up the things of this world and save their lives, John and Paul are despatched to a martyr's death and immortality in the Canon of the Mass. San Basilio then invokes the Blessed Virgin, who in answer raises San Mercurio from his tomb as the instrument of divine justice, and the play closes with Julian pierced by this saintly revenant and dying on the field of battle.

Thus baldly summarised, the play appears only to perpetuate the common caricature of Julian. He is still styled "monk and magician" as well as persecutor, and still expires with the legendary "*O Cristo Galileo, tu hai pur vinto,*" (thou hast conquered) on his lips. Nothing in this farrago seems to afford a new estimate.

Given the time and circumstances, one might hardly expect otherwise; yet, the curious old yarns are only the framework for something altogether new. Lorenzo broke sharply with all the past. Julian is far more than a renegade and persecutor: he is a ruler after the author's own heart, a hero even, possessed of private and public virtues of the highest order. Here is the first real change in Julian's fortunes in a thousand years. A mighty cycle of Western thinking had come full circle. Not since the remarkably balanced judgment of Prudentius, that devout Christian poet, had there been anything like Lorenzo's Julian: "Faithless, he, to God; but loyal to the Roman world" (*Apotheosis*, 450-4).

As one sovereign to another; as the grandson and disciple of the city-boss who quipped irreverently: "One does not govern a state with paternosters"; and as the *quondam* pupil of Ficino, that syncretising reformer, Lorenzo could view Julian with respect, even if he did not understand him. At

his first appearance in the play, he is introduced as being "of great heart and of immense talent"; and thereafter the most noble sentiments are put in his mouth, in fact, Lorenzo's own mature political ideals. Even Julian's irony at the expense of the Christians must have brought appreciative nods. In short, Julian is turned into a Renaissance prince, indeed into Lorenzo's idealised version of himself. With patriotic bravura, he rallies the people of the Empire for "blood vengeance" against the Parthians, reminding them that of old "when this eagle was seen, the world trembled like a leaf," and (pointing): "Yonder where the sun moves and sets peacefully at last, the Roman legions were feared." His passionate declamation:

Lo stimol dell 'onor sempre mi punge;  
la fiamma della gloria è sempre accesa.

*(Honor ever spurs me on;  
The flame of glory ever blazes.)*

sounds the true exuberance of the natural man in revulsion against the ascetic view of life. Julian also appears as the enlightened magistrate, deeply conscious of his dignity and of his obligation to sustain and protect his subjects. If his revenues are large, he holds openhandedness, not hoarding, to be his duty; for "the real lord is neither owner nor beneficiary; he is a steward." And, lastly, far from being the enthusiastic adept in all manner of soothsaying and divination he really was in life (to the confusion of incredulous admirers from Ammian to Voltaire), the Julian of the play is made to reject as "rubbish" all such prediction, as would Lorenzo himself, with the lordly flourish:

The ruler and the sage are both above the stars,  
. . . the auspicious hours are those  
The happy man himself picks out!

In this remarkable midsummer entertainment at the court of Florence, the philosopher of history might discern much prophecy. That the most brilliant prince in Christendom should boldly have brought the ancient enemy of the Faith into such high repute for the diversion of his family circle



was, in itself, startling; but that he should have gone to the length of playing the villain of the piece (doubling in the role of Constantine) must have deeply impressed the spectators, among them, it may well be, the future Leo X, his son, and the bastard nephew who would be Clement VII. Although the play found no imitators in Renaissance Italy, in *Leo's Gaudeamus* upon his elevation: "Let Us enjoy the papacy, since God has given it!" one may detect the very *brío* of the parental play.

## II

The assize now shifts to the scene of the earliest exploits of the young Caesar Julian: South Germany and the upper Rhineland. Here, in the prospering towns and cities, as the recent studies of Hans Rupprich have shown abundantly, the New Learning had been taking root since the mid-fifteenth century. Here was the crossroads where the humanism from beyond the Alps met the liberating spirit of Erasmus, who was to teach the *Philosophia Christi* and invoke Socrates as a saint.

Although there was no Florence here, no dynamic, brilliant capital of learning that set the tone for Northern intellectual life, in the next half-century the New Learning mingled with the Old; and soon the treasury of ancient literature was thrown open by that new thing, the printing press. What Trevor-Roper has called ". . . the golden age which lay between the European discovery of printing and the discovery of its antidote, the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*," now dawned. Among the earliest Greek classics to be printed, before even Thucydides or Plato, was Aldo's *editio princeps* (1499) of a collection of Julian's letters, long cherished among Byzantine literati. In the meantime Ammian had already made his debut in the Roman first edition of 1474; and by the mid-sixteenth century, as a crescendo of late-Roman authors issued from the presses, there was no reason why an earnest scholar should lack access to the facts about Julian, whether from hostile or friendly witnesses.

For a time, however, the foes who had long had their way

with him in the medieval German rhyming-chronicles and jest-books, where Julian was always the Christ-denying "*Ketzzerkaiser*" and "*zaubernde Tyrann*," continued doing so, even those laying claim to responsible scholarship. Thus Martin Luther, with characteristic conservatism and instinct for invective, interested not at all in truth for truth's sake, and thinking in terms of the infidels of the Egypt and Hungary of his day, was capable of vilifying Julian in the *Tischreden* as "*der Mammeluck*." In the idiom of a later century, he was "the unspeakable Turk," nothing more.

Unfortunately too for Julian, his Latin enemies were being reinforced from the East. The hostile early Greek Fathers, never before translated, were now being printed in Latin editions, and Cassiodorus' fifth-century Latin condensation of Theodoret, Sozomen, and Socrates, authors much responsible for the Julianic myth, became one of the more accessible and widely-circulated manuals. The German translation by Caspar Heid or Hedio, the Reformer and chronicler, served only to fasten this view upon the less learned German reader of the Reformation age.

But, as the New Learning spread and the new wealth of material came more and more within reach, more objective testimony also began to be offered, so as to modify the bigoted old allegations against Julian. First among these more judicial voices was that of Hartmann Schedel (1440-1514), whose *Buch der Chroniken und Geschichten* appeared at Augsburg in 1500. He cut short the ugly old yarns and presented Julian as no apostate but as "... an excellent (*fürtreffenlich*) man, learned in the liberal arts and especially in Hellenic letters; a potent and agile orator, with a diverse and vigorous memory; affectionate (*milt*) to his friends, equitable to men at large (*der landschafft*), and eager for honor and fame."

In the *Chronica, Zeitbuch, und Geschichtsbibel, von anbegyn bis in dis gegenwertig jahr verlengt* of the Bavarian priest, Sebastian Franck (1499-1542), who deserted the Church for the evangelical ministry, sympathy for the beliefs of others was carried even farther. Franck was one of those Reformers, now half-forgotten, who, refusing to follow the main

course of the Protestant movement, held to the concept of a natural religion reconciling all forms and creeds and spiritual experience. As one who often called Plato, Plotinus, and Hermes Trismegistos his masters, no less than Moses, he belongs in the line of Gemisthos and the humanists of the Florentine Academy. Truth, he held, is a conflict of opposites; saints and heretics alike have found God's eternal word guided only by an inner light.

In his *Chronica*, which led to his being hounded from place to place, he marshals the sources for the study of Julian, first the profane, then the clerical: the prosecution and the defence. For the first time in history the two confronted one another squarely and on even terms.

One aspect of German humanism was its conviction of the greatness of the German past. Out of this developed the major work of the third sixteenth-century German chronicler, Johann Thurnmeier or Turmair (1477-1542), known also as Aventinus from the village in Upper Bavaria where he was born. After studying at Ingolstadt and Paris, he became tutor in the family of the reigning duke at Munich, where he wrote his *Annalium Boiorum*. Here, against the background of fourth-century Gaul and Germany, the Caesar Julian, the Apostate-to-be, who time and again had swept across the Rhine with fire and sword, appears as the vigorous administrator and victorious commander he really was. Despite the author's religious and patriotic sympathies, his Julian is presented without rancour. To this trio of chroniclers may be added the Nassauer, Christian Egenolff (1502-1555), the first printer and publisher in Frankfurt-am-Main. In his *Chronik von An- und Abgang aller Weltwesen*, the humane learning he imbibed at Mainz, and a natural tolerance of temperament, added to a religious humility which taught him to see the hand of God in history, produced an unprejudiced view of human events and of Julian in particular.

To none of these four, however, was Julian the hero of old he had been to Lorenzo. No doubt, as Käte Philip comments in her study of the Apostate in German literature, they were "... too bounded by their narrow bourgeois world to attain

a sense of antique greatness, to say nothing of their ability to give it adequate form." Still, despite their limitations, they were the first modern scholars to assemble evidence favorable to Julian along with the unfavorable, and to lay it before the world.

It is remarkable that the truth about Julian, emerging slowly after so many centuries, should have found two such contrasting exponents: the brilliant Magnifico, who in his vanity defied tradition and self-assertingly identified himself poetically with Julian; and the didactic German scholars who, with more matter and less art, sought truth unaffectedly and humbly, but whose Julian lacks personality and color. Yet, both constructions pointed in the same direction.

By way of contrast with the chroniclers, the imaginative vernacular literature of sixteenth-century Germany offered little or no original point of view as to Julian. Its audience, the complacent world of *Spiessbürgertum*, read neither the newly-printed Latin classics nor the new prose chroniclers. It was content to take its time-honored values for granted and to remember Julian, if at all, as the outcast of tradition, who met the fate he well deserved.

This is reflected in the works of Hans Sachs, the cobbler of Nuremberg (1494-1576), to take the best-known example, where Julian appears frequently, but merely as a type or symbol to point a moral and quite devoid of personal identity. Thus, besides adaptations from Sozomen in Hedio's German translation, he turned the farcical old fable in the *Gesta Romanorum* about the emperor in the bath into a five-act comedy (1556), replacing the unknown "Jovinian" of the original with the name of the historical Julian. Here the haughty *Ketzer* becomes a Hanswurst, a figure of plebeian fun. Following the hounds on a hot day, he dismounts to bathe, and, while in the water, an angel steals his clothes and assumes his person. As he runs about mother-naked, unrecognized by his courtiers or even by his wife, the tyrant is unmercifully beaten and derided. Only when he prays for forgiveness for his vanity and persecution of the Christians is he at last restored.

It was a far cry from Lorenzo's patrician version of Julian to this uncouth fooling, with its naive rationale; but, until the intellectual revolution of the eighteenth century, and Gottfried Arnold's defence of Julian in his *Impartial History* (1699), German literature had nothing better to offer. The fate of Julian gives some measure of the German Renaissance.

### III

After the inconclusive hearings and equivocal recognition Italy and Germany had offered Julian, his case came next to France, where at last a voice was raised that rendered the verdict of modern times and assured him the place he has occupied ever since.

At the end of the fifteenth century, as Augustin Renaudet has shown, there was a good deal of humanist scholarship at Paris, and there were close scholarly relations with Medicean Florence; still, scholasticism was well entrenched in all the intellectual centres, books were lacking, and it was not until 1508 that there was anyone to teach Greek regularly at Paris. Then, within a mere quarter-century, change was so rapid and extreme that the young Pantagruel, at his books in Paris, was admonished that without Greek "*c'est honte qu'une personne se die sçavant.*"

The generation that followed the death of Francis I (1547) has been called the golden age of French scholarship. Books, manuscripts, and teachers of Greek and classical Latin became so much a matter of course that certain humanists turned to special fields of classical learning as their own. Among these specialists Julian had his full share. Indeed, it is from this period that the connection was first established between Paris and Julianic scholarship and interpretation—a connection that the city Julian loved has never lost.

The first of a line which boasts of such *érudits* and men of letters as Denys Pétau, La Mothe le Vayer, Abbé la Bléterie, Diderot, Voltaire, Cumont, and Bidez, was the Navarrese Pierre Martini (c.1530-1594), like his master the celebrated humanist and libertarian, Petrus Ramus, a Huguenot convert. Coming upon an unpublished manuscript of Julian's aston-

ishing *Misopogon* belonging to Ramus, Martini was so struck by its "genius and eloquence" and so captivated by its author that in 1566 he brought it out in a bilingual edition, together with the first Latin translation of Julian's letters. In the preface was included the first detached biography of the emperor, drawn from Ammian mostly, whose Julian, as a man and author, though not without faults, was held worthy of the highest praise. This sketch was afterward reprinted on various occasions.

The next work of Julian to be printed was, of all his writings, the one destined for the widest reception in modern times. This was *The Caesars*, a seriocomic *jeu d'esprit* at the expense of Julian's imperial predecessors, in which Constantine, his Christian uncle, is pilloried and the heathen Marcus Aurelius apotheosized. Its appearance in 1577, in a Greek and Latin version edited by Charles de Chanteclair (d. 1620), was opportune, as it must have prepared the way for a greater opus, in which Chanteclair and Martini joined forces: the earliest collected edition, in Greek and Latin, of Julian's works (1583).

But Julian's satire lent itself to purposes other than light and learning in later sixteenth-century France. It seems probable that the savage pamphleteering that accompanied the Wars of Religion (1562-1598) was responsible for *The Caesars* also being the first work of Julian to be put in the vernacular. The picture of the more scandalous doings of the Caesars that he draws is not unlike that of the unsavory court of Henry III (1574-1589), according to one contemporary: "*la Sodome royale . . . où règne un 'Héliogabale, hermaphrodite, gomorrhéen, eunuque, comble d'impudeur.*"

The translator, Balthasar Grangier, was an ecclesiastic; but the anonymity, the favorable view of Julian, and, above all, the seasonableness of his book suggest that it may have been more than the fruit of a learned Churchman's leisure and was actually a covert lampoon. In the introductory short life of Julian, the emperor is portrayed as everything His Most Christian Majesty was not: ". . . comparable with Titus for his great prudence, with Trajan for the happy issue of



his affairs, with Antoninus Pius for his clemency, with Marcus Aurelius for his continence, with all the great philosophers for the affection he bore for letters." Most astonishing of all, no mention is made of his apostasy; and his faults, though recognized, are those of temperament only.

Grangier's Julian, like Henry of Navarre, was a sign of the new age, in which many preferred merits on the throne beyond or other than simple orthodoxy. If *The Caesars* was indeed a stricture on the hated king, innuendo masquerading as an ancient classic, it was Julian's first appearance in modern polemics. How paradoxical that a prince condemned by many, including Comte and Renan in later times, as a mere reactionary, was thus, from the first, enlisted on the side of social criticism and reform!

One may be sure that the book, unlike Grangier's later rhyming translation of the *Divine Comedy*, reputed to have put Frenchman off Dante for a century, did nothing to distract them from their growing interest in Julian. Greek and Latin had already, in Montaigne's France, become "... the normal education, not only for scholars and ecclesiastics," as Arthur Tilley says, "but for every gentleman who was destined to a civil career"; and, thanks to the devotion of his editors and translators, Julian's history and convictions were now becoming common property.

This was emphatically the case wherever intellectual interests, weary of the religious controversies of their age, were found in opposition to Christian orthodoxy, or at least in competition with it; wherever, in fact, the search for a moral code apart from religious elements, implicit from the beginning in the Renaissance, was most alive. From about 1533, when the Italianate Etienne Dolet began to lecture at Toulouse, this ferment found hope in the rationalist ideas that spread into France from Padua, the great centre of free thought, and then passed from the closed circle of the schools into French literature. According to the disciples of these views, known in their own day by various opprobrious names, but now remembered as *Libertins*, it was possible, by distinguishing between the truths of faith and the truths of reason,

to accept the doctrines of the Church as a matter of faith (fideism) and, at the same time, to reject them on the grounds of reason. Among the more extreme, at least, such fundamentals of Christianity as personal immortality, providence, and miracles, were first called into question; later, even the Incarnation and the divinity of Christ.

It is not surprising that the Paduan intellectuals, continuing the Aristotelian traditions of the Italian universities, should have enlisted Julian in their cause, and that he should have enjoyed something of a vogue, along with Celsus, the second-century Platonist. Both had attacked the Faith in books known only through Christian refutations, and between them, as Henri Busson says: they "... offered the *incrédules* an entire system of disparagement to oppose the ensemble of Christian theology." From mid-century Paduan influence began to appear in the vernacular, in the works of philosophic-minded men of letters such as Jacques Tahureau, or in such humanistic writers as Bishop Pontus de Thyard, the last of the Pléiade; and from 1560, in apologists like the Huguenot leader, Du Plessis-Mornay, the name of Julian turns up again and again.

Heterodoxy may be said to have reached a climax, however, in a book Jean Bodin (1530-1596) wrote but did not dare publish. This was his *Colloquy*, a symposium in which seven savants, representing as many different religious viewpoints, debate their respective claims, drawing upon the views of Julian and Celsus, and presenting them at length. Essentially a Neoplatonist, Bodin sought the universal element in all religions, the "perennial philosophy," a phrase apparently coined about 1540 by Agostino Steuco, the Catholic Platonist, and Busson calls the book "the sum of the libertine theology of the Renaissance."

As Kristeller and Randall say, Montaigne is "... too individual a figure to be forced into the mold of any intellectual tradition"; but from the first he was exposed to all these winds of doctrine, from the time when unquiet spirits hovered at his father's château (where the Paduan Bunel left Sebond's *Theologia Naturalis* behind him), to the time when

Bodin, whose works Montaigne admired, gave him the idea of rehabilitating the Apostate.

However, Montaigne's entire life (1533-1592) might be regarded as a preparation for the task. Born the son of a Gascon squire with a relish for classical letters and independent thinking, he learned from early childhood to love the languages and genius of the ancient world and to share in the moral preoccupation of his age: in the search for wisdom, happiness, and tranquility. Only gradually, however, did there emerge the Montaigne who declared his independence not only of the dogmas of religious authority but those of rationalist philosophy as well, and who sought the road to the good life in his own inner human resources, his "Me."

All this quest was summarised in his unique book, one that Brunetière roundly calls "the most *considérable* of the whole sixteenth century." The subject of that book is man; and it was fitting that an author so conscious of the diversity of his matter, yet of its fundamental sameness; one who was so full of human sympathy and insight and so distrustful of ready-made opinions, should write an essay that is substantially an apology for Julian.

This essay, entitled "*De la liberté de conscience*," (*Essays*, Book II, 19) was probably written in 1578 or 1579, and published at Bordeaux in 1580. The inspiration derived from Montaigne's discursive reading, in particular, according to Pierre Villey, two books in Latin he had lately read and turned over in his mind: Bodin's *Methodus*, a kind of philosophy of history, and Ammian's *Roman History*. Why he did not read Julian himself we shall never know. Whether or not it was Bodin's book that directed him to the historian and roused his interest in Julian, it was there the essayist found him described as no apostate ("*is qui transfuga usurpatur*") and his memory vindicated against Christian obloquy. The human complexities and contradictions in Ammian's portrait fascinated him. What moral virtues flourished alongside religious error! Ever the gainsayer of the *parti pris*, Montaigne took up the case for the defence.

The apology for Julian is one of Montaigne's shortest es-

says, and least rambling. In our own civil wars, he begins, we see honorable Catholics driven beyond bounds in their zeal to violent and unjust measures. The same was the case in ancient times, when Christians destroyed pagan works of literature and praised rulers favoring their cause, while denigrating those hostile. This, he says, is plain in the case of Julian, "surname the Apostate." "He was indeed a very great and a very uncommon man," Montaigne goes on, one guided by philosophy; and there is "no kind of virtue of which he has not left behind him some very notable examples." His chastity was undisputed; his justice impartial; though a harsh enemy to Christians, he was not cruel; and in war he was a brave and gifted captain.

In religious matters Julian was at fault throughout, and having given up the Faith was dubbed apostate; but it is more likely that he never was a Christian, and hence (Montaigne implies) no apostate. Moreover, there is no evidence that he ever uttered the famous last words "Galilean, thou hast conquered!" Montaigne concludes as he begins, on an objective note, comparing the policy of toleration Julian pursued in order to divide the Christian world with the same device of the Valois kings of his day to dish the Protestant heretics.

It was a bold thing to do what even Jean Bodin, no timorous man, had not dared undertake: calmly to demonstrate how the rarest virtue is compatible with religious error; to unite reason with morality and emancipate both from the tyranny of dogma. Here was the sum of humanist syncretism, the harmony of Athens and Jerusalem. Of all the *Essays*, as Louis Cons declares in his study, "Montaigne et Julien l'Apostat," in *Humanisme et Renaissance*, this is one of the most touchy; for, despite the changing climate of opinion and the growth of secular morality, the conventional verdict on Julian was that of Cardinal Baronius, who would have thrown his dead body to the dogs, or that of the Huguenot poet, Du Bartas, who banished him among the blind:

*Parmi lesquels je voi un Symmache, un Porphyre,  
Un Celse, un Lucian qui, d'un coeur obstiné*

*La Vérité connue ont, traistres, oppugné,  
Avecques Julian, des empereurs le pire.*

(*Triomphe de la Foi*, II, 77-80)

This verdict, less and less unanimous in the autumn of the sixteenth century, was still defended by the full power of Church and State whenever they chose to act. Diderot learned this long after, at Vincennes.

That Montaigne should have courted the risks contracted by his advocacy testifies to the bond of sympathy between him and the Apostate, and his desire to transmit his sentiments to the world at large. In this he was abundantly successful. Montaigne had spoken; and, though not at once apparent, (to echo Augustine's dictum) the case was closed. As for Lorenzo's play and the German chronicles, it was long their fate to appear mere freaks without issue, lost in the untranslated obscurity of literatures without the wide ambit and prestige of French. Meanwhile the *Essays* took their place among the *chefs d'oeuvre* of Western literature; and if they were not so well known to the Germans and Italians, they soon found a special and enduring cultus among the English. Inevitably then, as part of what Gustave Lanson called "*la vaste enquête sur l'homme que Montaigne avait inaugurée sous prétexte de se peindre*," Julian became one of that "Breviary of good fellows," as Cardinal Du Perron styled the *Essays*, known wherever Montaigne was known.

What the Renaissance began was completed by the Enlightenment. The subject awaits research, but one may be sure that Montaigne's Julian helped form the judgement of the *philosophes*. If, much to Voltaire's irritation, "Apostate" still clung, it was no longer an accusation but a tag. Julian's apostasy was forgiven, the medieval decision was reversed, and only his virtues mattered. Indeed, he is the only Roman emperor to retain such sympathetic interest that his memory, unlike most of the imperial line, would not die, but was kept green in countless writings. "Every budding poet," observed Paul Heyse in 1888, "writes a Julian-play." This article is an attempt to show the reason.

But, just as the modern reader has usually known Pericles

from the pages of second-century Plutarch, the Julian of modern times has been neither he who wrote the *Misopogon* nor the bugbear of medieval fable. He was a third Julian, born in the little tower in Perigord, Montaigne's "*douce retraite ancestrale*," in the mind of a Renaissance man. In this mutation he became a moral hero whose virtues were held to need no religious sanctions. To some he was to become a kind of cult-figure, a philosopher-king who symbolised the life of reason; to frustrated spirits in eighteenth-century France, an ally in battle with the Establishment, its institutions and beliefs.

As we mark the sixteenth centenary of Julian's reign, the classical revival of the Renaissance has spent its force; and the environment it sprang from, together with the values that it fostered—Hellenism, liberalism, rationalism, individualism—have only an historical interest now. Will the story of this extraordinary man outlast the culture which revived him and made him over in its own image? Or will he be once more, outside the world of scholars, as dim as the Julian of the Middle Ages?



## YANKEES AND ARGENTINES

*Samuel Shapiro*

A COMMON CONVERSATIONAL gambit of American tourists impressed by the bustling energy of Buenos Aires is to remark, approvingly, that "the Argentines are really the Yankees of South America." The observation is mildly irritating to the average Argentine, but much of his annoyance comes from the fact that there is a good deal of truth in the comparison. While Argentina is historically and culturally a Latin American nation, and geographically further removed from the United States than any other, there are several traits which she shares with the U. S. and which distinguish both nations from all the others that lie between them.

### I

To begin with, the geographic setting of both nations is vast and diversified. The U. S. ranks fourth in area among the countries of the world, Argentina eighth; only the other giants like China and Russia equal these two in the variety of climate and topography found within their borders. Argentina is only one-third as large as the United States without Alaska, but her North-South extension is hundreds of miles greater, stretching from the bleak Antarctic iciness of Cape Horn up into the tropical forests of the Chaco. The Paraná is longer and wider than the Mississippi, and the Andes, while they occupy a smaller area than the Rocky Mountains, are higher; Aconcagua, at 22,834 feet, is the highest peak in the Western hemisphere.

Argentina's geographic regions inevitably remind the North American of his own country. The famed *pampa* resembles our prairie in its moist eastern section and the Great Plains in its western part, and it has similar overlapping corn, wheat, and cattle belts. Both countries have an industrial heartland, western deserts, and vineyard districts at the foot of the mountains. The sugar cane province of Tucumán resembles south-

ern Louisiana, and bleak, wind-swept Patagonia is the Argentine Alaska. Argentina, like the U. S., has substantial reserves of coal and petroleum, and the range of her agricultural output is even greater than our own. Both countries pour out a flood of beef, wheat, corn, tobacco, sugar, and citrus, but Argentina is also able to grow her own tea (in Misiones), and her own bananas (in the Chaco).

As a consequence of their size and complexity, both nations experienced considerable difficulty in wielding their diverse regions into a nation. The wine-grower of Mendoza and the *gaucho* of Entre Rios are as different from the sophisticated *Porteño* (resident of Buenos Aires) as a Georgia redneck or a Maine Yankee is from a New Yorker. In both countries these sectional differences were only partially resolved by a civil war. Argentina's struggle for unity was even more wounding than that of the United States; more or less constant fighting went on from her declaration of independence in 1810 until the federalization of the city of Buenos Aires seventy years later. The social and economic scars of three generations of intermittent internecine conflict have hardly healed even yet. The bitterness of the northern provinces against the government in Buenos Aires is as deeply felt as that of many Southerners against our Supreme Court, and it is expressed in the same way: "those people just don't understand our problems."

In both countries regional differences were complicated by the arrival of masses of immigrants. The influxes came from the same European nations in the years around the turn of the century, so that it is common for an Italo-Argentine, for example, to have relatives in Boston or Los Angeles. Because the La Plata region contained no precious metals or sedentary, exploitable Indians, it was the stepchild of the Spanish colonial system, and its agricultural potential was neglected in the scramble for the silver mines of Potosí. After independence, *caudilloism*, civil war, and Indian raids up to the very gates of Buenos Aires kept vast areas of the country unoccupied; as late as 1870 Argentina had less than two million people, some of them unconquered Indians. It was only in the 1880's, when the last *caudillos* were killed and

the railroad network fanned out across the country, that part of the immigrant stream pouring across the Atlantic was diverted southward to people the Argentine *pampa*. The Ranqueles Indians were driven from the plains south of Buenos Aires just at the same time that the Sioux and Comanche were 'pacified' by the United States Army; the Italians, willing to do the agricultural labor that the *gaucho* despised, moved in and replaced the Spanish as the largest ethnic group in the population. Three Argentine presidents have been Italians, and the country they ruled remains the whitest, most European in this hemisphere.

As in the United States, the immigrants clustered in certain areas and favored certain occupations. The Irish, who came earliest, turned to ranching, meat-salting, and politics. The Italians first came temporarily as 'golondrinas' (swallows) to harvest wheat during the European winter; later they filled in the wheat belt and took over the building trades and service industries. The Welsh established sheep colonies in Patagonia. The English, numerically small but influential beyond their numbers, invested in banks, railroads, and cattle farms, and brought with them English manners, customs, and games. (Soccer long ago replaced bullfighting at the national sport, and the professional teams are still called by such un-hispanic names as Racing, River Plate, and Newell's Old Boys.) In Argentina as in the U. S. almost every city of any size has its Oriental laundrymen, its synagogue, its foreign language newspapers, and its restaurants serving pizza, shish-kebab, and chop suey, as well as the native beefsteak. Buenos Aires, though not quite so big as New York, is perhaps even more cosmopolitan; even the far-northern city of Tucumán, eight hundred miles inland, has a Syrio-Lebanese society, an Anglo-Argentine Institute, a Goethe Society, a Zionist organization, and the United Sons and Daughters of Garibaldi. Second and third generation Argentines retain more of their foreign flavor than North Americans; in the locker room of the St. Andrews Golf Club in Rosario, one would swear he were in Glasgow or Birmingham.

Despite firm immigrant ties, both nations developed a strong tradition of isolation. For three hundred years Spanish

imperial policy made commercial and cultural exclusion of other powers an almost inflexible rule; and after 1810 Argentina was too preoccupied with internal struggles to pay much attention to the outside world. Washington and Jefferson warned their countrymen against participation in European power struggles, but the dictator Juan Manuel Rosas went so far as to cut off all foreign intercourse whatsoever. Despite Argentina's later dependence on England for manufactured goods, capital equipment, and a market for her beef and wheat, she remained neutral in both world wars. Much of the enduring popularity of Hipólito Irigoyen, the first democratically elected president, resulted from his resolute policy of neutrality in 1914-1918; later he won a second term with the Wilsonian slogan, "He kept us out of war." In the 1940's Argentina clung to neutrality long after every other nation in the hemisphere had gone to war with the Axis; the public disapproved of the regime's pro-German sympathies but was satisfied to remain at peace. The long distances that separated both Argentina and the U. S. from Europe, and the immense energies needed to subdue and settle their vast hinterlands for a long time kept either nation from playing any role in European politics.

With this reference to the frontier we come to still another similar factor in the history of the two countries. The long pre-eminence of Frederick Jackson Turner among American historians has led many of them to think that the whole frontier concept bears a U. S. copyright. In fact, however, the Turner thesis (that free land led to individualism and democracy) had been anticipated, argued out at great length, and dismissed in Argentina long before Turner was born. In nineteenth-century America the frontier was an increasingly remote and romantic place, weeks and even months away, to which a handful of people went to send back furs, gold, and stories of Indian warfare. In Argentina the frontier was a menacing reality, running perilously close to the center of population and blocking settlement of the country's richest lands. Eighty years ago Buenos Aires and Córdoba were frontier provinces, perpetually menaced by raiding

tribes; from the frontier regions also came the *gaucho* horsemen and the *caudillos*, who ruled with an iron hand for half a century. In his classic life of *Facundo*, published in 1845, Domingo F. Sarmiento made an anti-Turnerian evaluation of the influence of the frontier on his country's history, and came to the passionate conclusion that it represented, not democracy, but barbarism. Argentina could never become a civilized country, he wrote, until she wiped out both the frontier and the frontiersman.

Although the *gaucho*, the frontiersman, and the cowboy were historically doomed, in both countries they won enduring literary victories. Turner's glowing generalizations answered a deep emotional need in an increasingly urban, industrialized America; his thesis has scholarly defenders even yet. The idea of an escape to the wilderness has fascinated many of our writers, whether they dream of a raft on the Mississippi, a hidden valley in the Marquesas, a stretch of forest in the Delta, or the wild hills of Spain and Africa. In Argentina the *gaucho* scored an even more impressive triumph, and became the very symbol of the nation. Almost every book that rises above the level of *heimatkunst*, that is read and appreciated elsewhere in the Hispanic world, is a celebration of the *pampa*, that lonely, achingly wide stretch of land that flows out to the horizon like an endless extension of the sea. José Hernández' *Martin Fierro*, the national epic, is a stirring defense of the *gaucho*'s life and customs; it is Turnerism turned into poetry and meant to be sung to the guitar. Fierro, stripped of family and possessions by the dishonest men of the city, flees to the Indians and the wilderness for refuge:

*Mi gloria es vivir tan libre  
Como el pájaro del Cielo,  
No hago nido en este suelo  
Ande hay tanto que sufrir;  
Y naides me ha de seguir  
Cuando yo remonto el  
vuelo.*

My glory is to live as free  
As the birds of the air,  
I make no nest in this land  
Where there is so much  
sorrow;  
And no one need follow  
me  
When I take to flight  
again.

Huck Finn would have understood that. Argentina's most popular novel, Ricardo Güiraldes' *Don Segundo Sombra*, is, like Faulkner's *The Bear*, a lament for the lost wilderness, and *La Guerra Gaucha*, the finest movie ever made in Argentina, is another glorification of the *gaucho*.

To these parallels, finally, can be added examples of direct American influence on Argentina. Argentina's war for independence was partially inspired by the successful revolt of the Thirteen Colonies against Britain. The authors of the Argentine constitution took American federalism as their example; their government's federal form, separation of powers, bicameral legislature, electoral college and system of judicial review are copied from ours, in some places word for word. Juan Bautista Alberdi, the Argentine Madison, called on his country to "... enrich and make (itself) great ... as is being done in the United States. ... The English language, the language of liberty, of industry, of order, must be made more obligatory than Latin. ... The American type for grandeur is not Napoleon, but Washington, who represents not military virtues but prosperity, organization, and peace." Sarmiento, a towering figure in Argentine history, visited the U. S. twice, in the 1840's and 1860's, and brought back with him the first of a number of Yankee school teachers who established the Argentine elementary and Normal School system; "our first duty," he said, "is to northamericanize ourselves."

## II

But Sarmiento's enthusiastic program could not, of course, be carried out; Argentines are not Yankees. Set apart from their Latin American neighbors by the influences noted above, they are equally removed in spirit from their North American counterparts. During the last thirty years, which have witnessed the rise and fall of one arbitrary government after another, Argentine intellectuals have become painfully defensive about their nationality, and ever more determined to preserve economic and cultural independence; the thoughtful visitor from the U. S. speedily becomes aware of deep-seated and permanent differences between the two countries.



The most persistent of these arise from Argentina's Spanish origins and from the attitude toward life inherent in the concept of *Hispanidad*. The first settlers in both countries established customs which could be modified somewhat, but not fundamentally changed. The resulting differences are readily apparent in things as obvious and significant as language, religion, and law, and in such lesser matters as the daily working schedule. (The American who arrives in Buenos Aires and goes out at six or seven o'clock to eat supper, for example, will have to wait; the justly famous restaurants do not open until eight, and the crowds arrive an hour or two after that.) Late hours and the *siesta* habit are cultural, not climatic; Buenos Aires is seldom as unpleasantly hot in summer as New York or Washington, D. C.

Equally pervasive is the influence of Peninsular literature and the Spanish way of life: duelling, chivalry, predatory gallantry toward unattached women, the disinclination to save money or take business too seriously. The difference between the two countries is as wide as the gap between two such culture-heroes as Benjamin Franklin and Don Quixote. Argentine businessmen, unlike Carnegie or Rockefeller, see no point in piling up millions of dollars. They make enough to live comfortably, and then they desert the ranch or factory for a life of ease in the capital or in Europe. This attitude has hindered the growth of large-scale industry, but there is much to be said for it. No successful man in Argentina kills himself with overwork, or worries what he will do after retirement (called, appropriately enough, "*jubilación*").

A less fortunate inheritance from Spain is the *caudillo* tradition, and with it a chronic inability to organize stable government. The first colonists in North America brought with them the habit of self-government. After a brief period of experimentation in the 1780's, their descendants established a system which has successfully survived the shock of industrialism, party strife, and civil war. The settlers in the La Plata region, on the other hand, owed unquestioned and unlimited allegiance to the King of Spain. For two and a half centuries orders flowed downward through the Casa de In-

dias in Seville and the Viceroy in Lima. Unaccustomed to liberty, without administrative experience, the Argentine revolutionary leaders saw their new nation dissolve in anarchy. They could and did copy the American constitution, but the spirit of North American institutions eluded them; throughout the nineteenth century, periods of *caudillo* rule alternated with anarchy and civil war, and there were unsuccessful armed uprisings in 1890, 1903, and 1905. After Irigoyen's victory in 1916, in one of the few honest and free elections ever held in Latin America, Argentina could for some years take legitimate pride in being the wealthiest, best educated, and most democratic nation on the continent. But ancient weaknesses persisted; in 1930 an Army revolt established a minority government which in 1945 gave way to the dictatorship of General Perón. There ensued a humiliating decade of corruption, vandalism, and disorder, marked by increasing brutality and economic chaos. The inauguration of President Arturo Frondizi in 1958 has again raised hopes for a democratic Argentina, but at the present time the Army still dominates the nation.

Along with political instability (and the cause of a great part of it) is the enormous influence of the capital city on the nation's life. Greater Buenos Aires, where six of Argentina's twenty millions live, can be compared only to Paris or post-World-War-I Vienna in its monopoly of government, industry, foreign trade, and intellectual activity. Twenty nations have a larger population than Argentina, but Buenos Aires is the eighth largest city in the world, and by far the greatest in the southern hemisphere. A North American equivalent would be a super-city of fifty millions, handling eighty per cent of the nation's export trade and half its manufacturing, with a virtual monopoly of meat-packing, publishing, movie-making, light industry, and university life as well. Buenos Aires and its province were once so powerful that they existed for many years as a separate state; even today they produce over half the nation's industrial and agricultural output, and the rest of Argentina is the poorer for it. The American pattern of dispersed government and industry, with the

capital in one city, the publishing and money market in another, and the automobile and film industries in still others, has been healthier and more successful.

Another basic difference between the two countries has been the slower speed and imperfect success of Argentine industrialization. In 1900, when the U. S. had become the greatest industrial power of the world, Argentina was little more than a cattle ranch and wheat farm for the English market; "we may lose Canada," Winston Churchill quipped, "but never the Argentine." Industrialization began during the first World War and did not exceed the pastoral-agricultural sector of the economy in the value of its products until 1946; lacking usable coal and iron deposits, industries were dependent on agricultural raw materials and imported machinery, scrap iron, and fuel. Until Perón came to power by arousing the workers, a few thousand big landowners dominated the country and made abject concessions to England in order to safeguard their market. The 1930's in Argentina were the "decade of infamy," during which the nation's dependence on foreign capitalists and bankers exposed her to one humiliation after another.

One consequence of this delayed industrialism is the continued sharpness of class lines in Argentina. The maidservant, now a rarity in the United States, is still a commonplace in Argentina; she gets from \$10-\$15 a month plus board. Television sets, telephones, vacuum cleaners, and washing machines, on the other hand, are semi-luxuries far beyond the reach of any worker. The automobile as such is no longer a status symbol in the United States, although its make and model may be. But in Argentina, where 1950 models sell for \$4500 (the equivalent of four years' wages) strikers burn autos in the streets as hateful symbols of the 'oligarchy.' Huey Long's "Share the Wealth" program had only an ephemeral appeal in its day, and it would have none whatever in the 1950's. But Juan and Eva Perón, using a Latin variation of the same slogan, were able to whip up the Argentine "shirtless ones" and ride roughshod into power. If given the opportunity, the angry, resentful workers from the dreadful slums

of Buenos Aires would once again vote a dictator into power.

As if to compensate Argentina for her problem of class antagonism, history has spared her the racial and religious tensions that trouble the United States. Colonial Buenos Aires had a rather numerous slave population; Bernardino Rivadavia, an early President of the Republic, was a mulatto, and Negroes were prominent in the *Mazorca*, Rosas' private gang of cutthroats. But slavery was abolished in 1810 and the Negroes died of disease or were killed off during the civil wars; it is rare to see one in Argentina today. The Indians, never as numerous as in Peru or Mexico, were also killed off and make up less than one per cent of the population. As for religious differences, they hardly exist. There are occasional disputes over religious instruction in the schools or the political role of the Church, but Argentina remains solidly Catholic and her President is required by the constitution to be of that faith. Current North American arguments over integration, civil rights, and the Catholic-for-President issue get a bad press along the Rio de la Plata.

### III

The relationship between the two countries has always been one-sided; Argentines cannot help being aware of the United States, but North Americans have only vague ideas about their farthest southern neighbor in this hemisphere. Argentina is as far away as China or Japan, twice as far as England, and it has been of trifling importance to us as compared with any of them. What Samuel Flagg Bemis has described as Argentina's "deep-seated and inveterate resentment" of the United States did not seem to matter to us; even Perón's pro-Nazi policies were but a fleabite on the Yankee elephant. Argentine culture, history, and foreign policy have been of interest only to a few specialists.

Our complacent ignorance about Latin America has been shaken by recent demonstrations against us in a dozen cities; evidences of anger and distrust pierced even the diplomatic curtain that surrounded Eisenhower on his visit to Argen-

tina last year. The narrowing margin of our economic superiority over the Communist world points up the increasing importance of the underdeveloped nations like Argentina that are still open to our influence. Since his inauguration President Frondizi has tried to restore the pro-United States policies of Sarmiento. Unlike previous Argentine presidents, he has welcomed American loans, investments, and technical assistance, and he has even made a precedent-shattering visit to the U. S. Given this official encouragement, and the special circumstances that link the history of the two nations, we are presented with an opportunity to win a valuable friend. As Castro's strident anti-Yankee example gains adherents through the rest of Latin America, this opportunity is clearly one that we cannot afford to lose.

